DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 445 686 IR 057 898

AUTHOR	Walzer, Norman; Stott, Karen; Sutton, Lori
TITLE	Managing Illinois Libraries: Providing Services Customers Value.
INSTITUTION	Alliance Library System, Pekin, IL.; Western Illinois Univ., Macomb. Illinois Inst. for Rural Affairs.
PUB DATE	2000-05-00
NOTE	127p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Web site: http://www.IIRA.org/pubs.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Attitudes; City Officials; Futures (of Society); Library Administrators; *Library Development; *Library Services; *Public Libraries; Questionnaires; *Rural Areas; Surveys; Tables (Data); Use Studies; User Satisfaction (Information); Users (Information)
IDENTIFIERS	Illinois (Central)

ABSTRACT

Public libraries are an important asset in virtually any size community, but especially in small towns where many social institutions are in decline or have left. Libraries increase the quality of life, help attract new residents, and support the quality of life that is essential to attracting businesses. Results from surveys of library users, administrators, rural public, and mayors confirm the fact that public library services are held in high esteem by users and rural residents alike. Growth in Internet use, computer training, and similar services are well-received by residents. Shifts in library services reported by library administrators closely mirror the preferences reported by users. Increased services are pressuring library budgets, and it is clear from responses that libraries will need additional funds to provide more services in the future. Library administrators reported that they expect increases in bequests and other financial support and feel that public support, overall, will continue to grow. This report presents results of a study of rural public libraries in central Illinois in 1999, including: attitudes toward library services in rural areas; Alliance Library System library users; library administrators; perceptions of mayors; looking to the future--making the transition; taking public library service into the future--transition expectations, opportunities, and obstacles; and designing library destiny--declining, digital, or demand-driven. Contains 52 references. (Author/MES)

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Managing Illinois Libraries:

Providing Services Customers Value

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Managing Illinois Libraries:
Providing Services Customers Value

by Norman Walzer, Karen Stott, and Lori Sutton

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Published by Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs
518 Stipes Hall
Western Illinois University
1 University Circle
Macomb, IL 61455-1390
www.IIRA.org

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First printing: May 2000

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Preface

Public libraries will play an increasingly important role for residents in rural Illinois in the next decade as the information economy continues to unfold. More and more residents rely on computers and the Internet to obtain information, purchase goods and services, and for entertainment. Libraries are often at the heart of these activities, especially for residents unable to purchase a computer and/or who need assistance in using it effectively.

Many libraries have made great strides to redirect and increase services to meet the growing public demand, especially for computer training and usage. Others, however, especially small libraries with limited budgets and staff, have not been able to move as quickly. Ironically, it may be the libraries in small remote rural communities that can provide the greatest service to residents who have fewer alternatives to find the desired services. Rural areas often are managed by volunteers who have limited training and experience with economic development practices and other issues. Libraries can play a major role in supporting these efforts and helping public officials make better decisions for the public good.

Since not all that much systematic information is available on the roles that public libraries play in rural areas, the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA) joined with the Alliance Library System (ALS) to study the attitudes and experiences of library administrators as well as the general public, library users, and municipal officials. Four sets of surveys were undertaken in the fall of 1998 and the winter of 1999 to create a databank and conduct an analysis of the issues and concerns of librarians, attitudes of residents and local public officials, and what library administrators see as major issues in the future.

In conducting this study, we have many people and agencies to thank. First, nearly 6,500 people took the time to complete one of the four questionnaires and to provide insights, in one way or another, about the roles of public libraries. Second, the nearly 90 public library administrators who distributed the questionnaires to users in their libraries are key to the success of this endeavor. Third, Valerie Wilford, executive director of the Alliance Library System, recognized the need for this project and provided time for Karen Stott to distribute and collect surveys and otherwise participate in this research endeavor. Finally, Nancy Baird, Monica Grimsley, and other members of the IIRA staff processed the information and prepared the final copy for printing. Without all of this assistance, the project would not have been possible.

This report is also contained on the IIRA web page at **www.IIRA.org** in the publications section.

Executive Summary

The transformation of the economy from an industrial base to an information or knowledge-based society has brought many changes for businesses and residents in rural areas. Greater opportunities to access new sources of information, even from remote rural areas, clearly exist. Businesses have moved to take advantage of this access to lower their costs of doing business. Rural residents can purchase goods and services using the Internet or other forms of e-commerce to reduce the travel costs associated with living in remote areas.

The advent of computers and the Internet has opened new opportunities for rural public libraries. Now libraries can provide access to information sources that formerly were virtually unavailable in small towns. Many information sources are available in rural libraries because of electronic access and library partnerships. Illinois libraries cooperate to share resources using tools created and maintained by regional library systems. Some of these tools are the Union List of Periodicals, listings of magazines and journal holdings, LLSAPs (Local Library System Automation Programs), and listings of print collection offerings in member libraries.

These tools have been conceptualized and developed by the Illinois regional library systems that were created to encourage Illinois library cooperation for the past 32 years. The information location and retrieval tools created by the 12 regional library systems are now mounted on the Internet. Recent innovations have made Illinois one of the first states to offer statewide resource sharing. This resource sharing is supported by both the Virtual Illinois Catalog (VIC), the web-based online catalog of statewide library holdings, and by a delivery system of vans that cross Illinois daily to deliver library requests. FirstSearch, an electronic resource containing full-text journal articles and indexes, is delivered via the Internet to rural libraries because of a licensing agreement negotiated for all libraries in Illinois by the Illinois State Library. Using FirstSearch, libraries in rural Illinois can access WorldCat, a source containing the merged catalogs of libraries around the world.

Libraries can work with business owners to help them stay current with the latest technology by providing Internet access and instruction to library customers on the appropriate use of the Internet. Librarians are now in a position to help users evaluate Internet sites to determine their validity and/or appropriateness for various user groups.

Libraries also can help residents, especially students, access new information sources and help them bridge the disparity between educational programs in metro and rural areas. Increasingly, librarians are being encouraged to approach customer service in many of the same ways that businesses might respond in the private sector.

This report examines practices and policies of rural public libraries in nearly 30 counties in central Illinois in 1999. Most of these libraries (72.7 percent) serve a population of less than 5,000 residents. Only 5.2 percent serve a population of more than 25,000. Most of the libraries (62.8 percent) are financed by special districts, as is typical of libraries in Illinois. Thus, the information contained in this report will be of most benefit to small public libraries and policymakers in rural areas.

The analyses are intended to help library administrators understand the attitudes of users, the general public, and local public officials in regards to current library services and services that should be provided in the future. Responses from mail surveys of library users, library administrations, the Illinois Rural Life Panel, and mayors in central Illinois are systematically analyzed so that library administrators can assess how well current services are being perceived and the areas that might be improved to meet customers' needs.

Library Users

A sample of 2,776 library users in 79 libraries within the Alliance Library System (ALS) was surveyed. The library users were asked about the quality of current services, additional services they would like, and whether they would pay more to have additional services provided. User responses are analyzed by age and income to better understand the responses.

Library users were asked to indicate the importance of 34 services regularly provided by many libraries. The services were grouped into those designed to help users improve their job or income status and specific services that libraries generally provide to all users. To make the information manageable, the services were grouped into nine broad categories and users were asked to rate the importance of each using a five-point Likert Scale ranging from "not important" to "very important."

Overall, customers ranked competent and friendly service as most important. In other words, they value librarians who are knowledgeable and willing to help them with requests. They also value interlibrary loan access, access to the Internet, children and youth services, and hobby and leisure services, as well as basic reference services. Different responses are found by age and income level but, by and large, the differences can be explained by the direct value of the specific services to the population cohort and/or their familiarity with the services provided.

Services that did not have a direct impact on users were rated lower. For instance, the category of economic development and business services was ranked lowest, followed by employment and workforce development programs. These programs do not directly affect a large number of users and many may not have been familiar with their benefits.

A more detailed examination of the user responses shows that obtaining interlibrary loans, improving family members' grades in school, gaining access to the Internet, and reading out-of-town newspapers and magazines are considered very important by library users in this study.

Library users overwhelming (99.0 percent) see the public library as adding to the quality of life in the community. Also, 64.0 percent reported that libraries help attract businesses, and 80.4 percent reported that libraries help attract or retain residents. Furthermore, 96.2 percent see a positive connection between library services and improving a family member's grades in school. Clearly, library users are pleased with library services in Illinois.

Users (71.2 percent) also are willing to pay more to have library services enhanced and 82.3 percent are willing to pay between $1.01 and $3.00 per month for the increases in service. This willingness to pay more does not seem to be related to the income level of respondents.

When asked to place a dollar value on the services received by their family from the library during the past 12 months, users reported an average of $853 or more than $70 per month. This value, of course, is based on people currently using the library and may not be relevant for others in the community.

The importance that respondents assigned to each of the nine service categories was examined in terms of the willingness to pay. Substantial differences were reported in preferences for services and willingness to pay.

Customers were grouped into those expressing a high level of satisfaction with library services and those expressing low satisfaction. A definite relationship exists between residents expressing high satisfaction and the provision of Internet and computer services. The size of library collection is also important in determining satisfaction levels, with users of small libraries more likely to report less satisfaction.

Library Administrators

The study paid special attention to library services for which demand is increasing and those for which the demand has declined in the past two years. Library administrators reported that the two services with the greatest increases in demand have been helping users learn the Internet (71.1 percent) and helping them use computers (64.5 percent).

Librarians reported several services that had experienced decreased demand in the past two years. Decreases most often reported are literacy training (35.5 percent), business reference services (33.9 percent), and staff presentations to public interest groups (29.0 percent). In some instances, these declines probably resulted from changes in public need. The results may also suggest that libraries' limited human and fiscal resources have been reallocated to higher demand service areas.

Library administrators also noted a decline in private fundraising efforts; however, in recent years, grant opportunities have been available from state government sources which may have lessened the need for librarians to contact other agencies for fiscal resources. Some libraries in the study area have received major bequests for specific projects. This may have lessened the time spent seeking private funding.

Many libraries have experienced financial difficulties reallocating sufficient resources (human and physical) to meet the added demands caused by the explosion in technology. Fortunately, the Secretary of State/State Librarian of Illinois provided computers to every library. In some instances, access to the Internet has been provided by local telecommunication providers or subsidized by e-rate funding. Without regional library systems and the State Library negotiating and purchasing licenses for shared databases offered over the Internet, local library resources would be further drained.

Library administrators reported that, if additional funds were available, helping users with the Internet was the highest priority (56.8 percent). Next in importance was to broaden the program offerings in the library (39.2 percent), followed by marketing library services to the public (23.0 percent), and promoting the importance of reading and reading skills (21.0 percent).

While the specific rankings vary somewhat, there is general agreement between the library administrators' views about what should be expanded and the services that users perceive as important. Overall, community service initiatives and business outreach activities were ranked less important by both librarians and users. This ranking may reflect the fact that the current users are not directly affected by these services and thus, are not aware of their value.

Perceptions of Mayors

Public libraries serve a diverse clientele, including public agencies within the community. Since they receive a majority of their funding from either the city government or a special district, it is important to understand how local public officials perceive the services provided by libraries. A survey of Illinois mayors conducted by the IIRA in the fall of 1998 and the winter of 1999 included several questions about mayors' attitudes regarding participation by libraries in local economic development activities. These findings were compared with a national survey of local public officials conducted in 1995 by the Illinois State Library, Library Research Center (LRC) at the University of Illinois. Cities located within the ALS were examined in this report.

In the LRC's statewide survey, local librarians (69 percent) felt that they were responding better than most other local agencies to the needs of residents. In the same survey, however, local public officials (chief executives and budget officers) were less complimentary with only 32 percent reporting that libraries were responding to the needs of residents better than most other local agencies.

Based on the definition of an "ideal library" as a measure of expectation, however, local public officials were much more positive in the LRC study. Eighty-two percent ranked the contributions by libraries to individual or community well-being as high or very high. Sixty percent of library respondents rated their own knowledge of community needs as high or very high, but only 40 percent of local public officials responded in that way.

There are many opportunities for local public libraries to assist with local community and economic development efforts. Library users rated the importance of these efforts relatively low among other activities in which libraries engage, and librarians indicated that not much staff time was devoted to these efforts. Only about one in five mayors responding to the IIRA statewide survey reported active involvement by librarians in local economic development efforts. Part of the explanation, according to the mayors, is that assistance from the library is not needed. Also, some librarians are not trained in local economic development practices and may not be very interested in adding these activities to an already overloaded schedule.

There is some indication that mayors are not always familiar with the holdings and/or services available in libraries, but mayors in the ALS (43.8 percent) reported that they intend to include libraries more in future economic development efforts. The point may be that, for librarians interested in being involved in development efforts, better communication with public officials may be necessary so that mayors realize the types of library services available.

Looking to the Future

Public libraries, even in small communities, will face many challenges because of technological change. Rapid increases in computer and Internet usage have placed additional demands on library personnel to train the public and to give personal assistance to users. Library users and administrators were asked to indicate changes that they expect in the future and ways in which they may have to adjust.

Library users reported a desire for more programming for both youth and adults and increases in the collection. In smaller libraries, the need to increase the collection may be at least partly offset by greater use of interlibrary loan services and electronic databases currently licensed by the Illinois State Library. Expanded computer access and classes are also important but were reported by fewer than 10 percent of the users responding. It may be that the need for service expansion in these areas is limited to specific locations, especially among relatively small libraries with limited budgets.

Library administrators were asked about options for enhancing services and most of these involved building on recent technological advances such as the Internet and on maintaining interlibrary loan partnerships with other libraries. Respondents listed the following as possible service enhancement responses: (1) increase public awareness that interlibrary loan access is available via the Internet; (2) libraries provide enhanced Internet access and increase the availability of training for customers on computer usage; (3) increase awareness of home pages, on-line catalogs, and web sites; and (4) library staff must be prepared as trainers through professional continuing education courses to offer more public education on the use of new computer applications in the library.

Library administrators also realize that libraries must gain public support if they are to receive adequate funding. When asked how they might accomplish this, library administrators suggested several approaches. Libraries can build partnerships with other libraries, library systems, and agencies, such as schools, to accomplish their mission. They must also meet the customer demands for enhanced library programming. Library administrators expressed a recognition of the need to listen to customers in order to improve customer service and to offer more customized library services.

Increased staffing at libraries was suggested as one of the best ways to improve customer service. Strategic long-range planning (i.e., ALA's Planning for Results) and other community needs assessment methodologies can assist planners to make library services more relevant to the current needs of a community.

Libraries will also need to aggressively pursue new revenue streams to purchase new and upgraded technology. Many of these strategies for improving library service in the future will require time and effort that may not be readily available at the local library level, especially in small rural libraries. They may have to rely on assistance from regional library systems or other agencies.

Public Library Services in the Future

Librarians were asked for their vision regarding changes that will occur in the next decade to impact public service. While differences were reported by size of library and region, several trends are common among many respondents.

- More usage of public libraries was predicted.
- An increase in library funding from bequests and donations was foreseen.
- More public involvement in planning and increased taxpayer support of libraries was anticipated.
- An increase in interlibrary loan activity was envisioned.
- More partnerships with local, regional, and statewide agencies were predicted.

Overall, library administrators seem positive about the future for public libraries, although they certainly recognize the challenges that must be faced. Specifically, library administrators were asked to identify obstacles that will impact their ability to achieve their vision. Two obstacles emerged as most significant.

One of the greatest obstacles perceived by librarians is competition for the public's time. Greater work or family demands may have an impact on the public's time to pursue recreational reading or to seek information.

The other major obstacle is limited financial resources. In fact, during the 5 past three years (FY94-95 compared with FY96-97) local public libraries within ALS have seen a 3.0 percent increases in operating expenses in inflation adjusted dollars. This is not an annual figure; rather, it is a total for the three years. In general, a local public library's revenue is composed of 85 percent local property taxes and 7 percent state sources (i.e., special grants).

When library administrators were asked to realistically assess and balance their vision for the future with the perceived obstacles, they predicted several actual changes within the next ten years. Administrators of both large and small libraries agreed that the skill level of library staff would increase and so would the level of customer service provided by library staff. They also agreed that more computers and Internet services would be provided in the future. Administrators of larger public libraries identified twice as many changes that they believed would actually become reality, setting an ambitious and optimistic agenda for the future of their libraries.

In addition, library administrators identified two areas where public demands currently outpace the library's fiscal and staffing resources. Helping customers use the Internet (71.9 percent) and assisting customers to learn to use computers (67.2 percent) were named with greater frequency than any other services.

If additional funds became available for libraries, public library administrators indicated they would budget for these improvements:

- Offering more youth services programming and more programs for adults
- Library construction or building renovation and remodeling projects
- Technology upgrades to support Internet and computer-related improvements
- Increased library staff to offer improved customer service

At the beginning of the new century, libraries face challenges and opportunities that will leave no library untouched. Public libraries will become either much more than they are now—or much less. Based on analysis of customer preferences and emerging technology trends, librarians must be proactive in determining the destiny of their libraries. Libraries must maintain a balance between those services that can best be delivered using new technologies with limited staff intervention and those services that require increased staff time with human interaction.

This report summarizes several Illinois initiatives on the horizon in 2000 that can bring new vitality to libraries if library administrators and staff are prepared to embrace the innovative opportunities. To make Illinois libraries demand-driven institutions, library administrators and boards must listen to customers and design an appropriate mix of library services to address the needs of customers of all ages from a variety of economic and educational levels as lifelong learners.

Managing Illinois Libraries:

Providing Services Customers Value

The U.S. economy underwent a major transformation during the past several decades, moving from an industrial orientation to an informational age. The information society has brought mixed blessings for rural communities and has brought new opportunities for public agencies to provide services. At the same time, this has broadened competition as consumers increasingly purchase goods and services from the Internet. On balance, however, the potential for rural public institutions to provide more and better services has increased and services available to rural residents are much improved.

Technology has affected rural areas in several ways. On one hand, advances in telecommunications allow businesses to locate in rural areas and avoid the congestion, high land prices, taxes, crime, pollution, and other negative characteristics often associated with large metro centers. Officials in some rural communities, especially those within commuting distance of metro areas, have taken advantage of these opportunities and have tried to position their local economies to participate better in the national economic expansion. Internet access, improved telecommunication switches, and a better-trained workforce are just a few examples of these efforts.

Commerce Secretary William M. Daley announced in January 2000 that "New technologies are now the major driving force of our country's economic growth." He noted that more than one-third of U.S. growth stems from the nation's burgeoning information technology industries. "Access and training, therefore, become even more essential so that all Americans have the ability to participate and benefit from the new economy," Daley added.

At the same time, remote rural areas face significant obstacles in competing for high-paying jobs and in attracting businesses. Access to technological advances typically has come more slowly to remote rural areas and often is relatively more expensive than in metro areas, at least in the short-term. Commonly available telecommunication services in large cities sometimes are not available in small towns or are available at a prohibitive cost. Internet access sometimes involves a long distance charge in rural areas, but this situation is becoming less common with expansions in the number of Internet service providers. Businesses accustomed to high-quality telecommunication services in large cities look for them in considering relocation sites. Firms locate where there is an ample supply of inputs needed for their production process. More and more, accurate and current information is a crucial input for businesses. Growth in the information economy will require efficient access to this information. As will be shown later, public libraries have a role to play in accessing this information.

What are considered basic services in metro areas often place rural locations at a disadvantage for businesses and residents who rely on advanced technologies. This difference has resulted in a "digital divide." In July 1999, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) released a major study, *Falling Through the Net: Defining the Digital Divide*, which showed that the gap between American information "haves" and "have nots" has widened significantly.

A report by the Bureau of the Census, based on 1997 data, revealed that one in five Americans used the Internet (LJ Hotline 1999); however, Media Metrix recorded 63.9 million unique Internet visitors in October 1999, fewer than one in four Americans (*PC Magazine* 2000, 12). "There are still many Americans who do not receive the benefits of our nation's digital economy," according to NTIA head, Gregory Rohdes (NTIA 1999). The "have nots" are more likely to be poor and to live in remote rural areas.

In some respects, this disparity in services is similar to the rural electrification issues early in this century and the related impact on rural development. Electricity and phone services were viewed as essential to a high quality of life and public support was provided to extend these services to remote areas that, otherwise, probably would not have been suitable for many businesses. With Internet access, the issue becomes how to best provide access to those who, otherwise, would not have these services.

The need for access to the Internet at a reasonable cost is becoming especially important for several groups, including students and small businesses. In time, Internet access will be as accepted as phone or electrical service. Kornblum (1997) noted that "The rich are going to get richer in terms of information" (2). The information-poor will become more impoverished because government agencies, community organizations, and businesses are displacing resources from their ordinary channels of communication onto the Internet (Goslee 1998). In an effort to address this growing concern, Illinois passed legislation requiring state government information to be available electronically, with responsibility for this access placed on the Illinois State Library. The result is Illinois Government Information (IGI) available from the *FindIt!* website provided by the Illinois Office of the Secretary of State/State Librarian.

The 2000 Census of Population will be one of the first major tests of the need for access to the Internet. Local officials and businesses in areas without direct access and/or an alternative data distribution service, such as a library with Internet access, will encounter significant difficulty obtaining Census data for grant applications, monitoring economic conditions, and other basic management information needs. They also will find that, in the future, more and more announcements or notifications by public agencies, foundations, and other groups will be sent via electronic means, placing local officials without access to these media at a substantial disadvantage.

A major concern, therefore, is how to close the digital divide in the most efficient fashion by using existing resources and institutions. Certainly schools have participated in this initiative with the introduction of computers and other instructional technology; however, educational institutions cannot complete this task alone and they do not reach nonschool-age residents.

Role of Public Libraries

Public libraries exist in even small communities and traditionally have played a major educational role for children and adults alike. Computer technology and the Internet open vast opportunities for libraries to serve the public with an entirely new array of services. In many respects, the libraries represent virtually the only public institution within a small community that can provide these services efficiently. With free or low cost access to both print and electronic information sources, instruction on Internet and computer usage, and specialized technology to support electronic access and interlibrary loan, even small public libraries can improve the overall quality of life and business outlook (Fine 1990; Jeong 1990). Public libraries, working in partnerships with schools and other agencies to provide access to current information technology, can help capture the economies of scale that small businesses, on their own, could not achieve and can provide basic services that many elderly and poor residents might not be able to afford.

While the information age opens virtually unlimited opportunities for public libraries to enhance services, the main challenge for library administrators is to find the human and financial resources to provide these new services, given the traditional demands for other services. As will be shown later, in most instances, the opportunities for improving services exceed the resource base.

With the new technology, public libraries can also play a stronger role in enhancing the social capital within the community by engaging residents in discussions of important local issues, national trends, and other topics. By helping residents learn to use the Internet and by providing related services, libraries can help communities find new solutions to problems resulting in residents being better informed and thus better able to participate in the decisionmaking process. The need for more efforts along this line has been recognized increasingly in recent years (Ladd 1999; Putnam 1995). In making a case for entrepreneurial capital, Flora, Sharp, and Flora (1997) claim that:

> communities do not become civic simply because they were rich. The historical record strongly suggests precisely the opposite; they have become rich because they were civic. The social capital embodied in norms and networks of civic engagement seems to be a precondition for economic development, as well as for effective government. Development economists take note: Civics matters. (625)

Thus, the future for public libraries has changed from predominantly helping users find reference books, information from the print library collection, or recreational reading materials to serving as a major link to information and opportunities worldwide. Public librarians in the future will play a larger role in the process of educating residents in the use of the Internet and in selecting or evaluating the Internet resources available. For some residents, the public library may be virtually the only place to obtain these services and keep up with technological advances.

Access to an effective and efficient interlibrary loan system, to the Internet, and to well-trained personnel makes libraries, especially in small communities, a major asset for the entire community. At the same time, the demand for new services, such as Internet training, will require additional funds, especially if current services are to be maintained (McClure and Bertot 1998; Palmer 1992; Welch 1994).

Many public libraries have made major strides in responding to the new opportunities provided by technology. Even relatively small libraries provide instruction on computer software; Internet access; help with searching the Web; and evaluation of on-line resources to help businesses identify new markets, assist residents to prepare for and find better jobs, promote community interests through a web page, or assist with economic development projects. The technology has advanced so rapidly that librarians are not always well-trained for these activities or may find them intimidating. Fortunately, states such as Illinois have a strong network of library consortia/systems whose role is to provide such training and technical assistance regularly for library staff.

While numerous opportunities to improve the quality of life in a community through expanded library services exist, clearly library administrators cannot reach their potential alone. Residents must want to reach out and improve themselves, businesses must recognize the need for better and more accurate information with which to make decisions, and public officials must recognize the potential for the contributions that a public library can make in an informational economy.

Purpose of Report

The current research project arose from a recognition of the growing importance of public libraries to the future of many small communities. Especially during the 1980s, small towns lost main street businesses and social organizations that contributed significantly to the quality of life. Schools consolidated, youth left for better paying jobs elsewhere, and many residents began to commute to larger metro centers to work thereby reducing the vitality of many small towns. In these cases, the public library can take on an even greater importance as a source of information, recreation, and stimulus for discussions of local issues. In some instances, downtown libraries have been a focal point in downtown revitalization efforts (Palma and Hyett 1999, 27). As residents look to larger communities for employment, shopping, and entertainment needs, they will spend less time in a small community and it will be harder to maintain a tie to local institutions. Continuation of these trends will mean that residents with less mobility, usually the elderly and the poor, will lose access to basic services and entertainment. Training and access to the Internet can help meet their needs without their physically leaving the community.

Fortunately, the Office of the Secretary of State/State Librarian in Illinois has invested heavily in rural libraries during recent years in order to provide computers and access to full-text databases such as FirstSearch. In turn, library systems, such as the ALS, provided extensive training opportunities for public librarians and assistance with grant proposals to help prepare Illinois libraries for the information age.

A remaining question, however, is the extent to which public libraries can take advantage of the opportunities to provide these services given the many demands for their limited time and financial resources. An important question raised in this report is the extent to which public libraries, many of which have a staff of one or two librarians, have been able to provide traditional services as well as keep pace with the new service demands precipitated by the Internet, interlibrary loan, and information available in yet another format—electronic.

Organization of Report

This project addresses several issues. First, the attitudes of library customers are examined, especially in terms of the services that they consider most important. These attitudes are then compared with the resource allocation, especially of staff time, that library administrators devote to these services.

Second, the extent to which librarians have been able to work in the community "outside of the library" especially on local economic development efforts is addressed. Attitudes of mayors regarding participation of libraries in these efforts are also considered. The large increase in demands for training on computer and Internet usage has caused library administrators to make hard choices about deployment of resources. This study explores ways in which libraries have responded to these new opportunities and the extent to which they are supported locally.

In this project, library administrators are being encouraged to approach services provided by libraries much like a business might deal with similar issues. In other words, library users are seen as customers with a specific set of preferences. If librarians can assess the needs of their customers and provide services accordingly, they not only can compete effectively with other information sources, but they also can maintain a solid base of funding in the future. The data presented in this report can help librarians identify the preferences for services and provide insights into ways that librarians can better serve their customers with current budgets.

The diverse services provided by rural public libraries in central Illinois are examined from four perspectives: (1) library users, (2) library administrators, (3) the general rural public, and (4) mayors of communities in which the libraries are located. The study area is the Alliance Library System serving 30 counties (approximately one-third of Illinois' counties) spread across 14,000 square miles of central Illinois (**Figure 1**). There are approximately one million residents in the ALS service area. The ALS contains 115 public libraries plus school district, academic (four-year and community college), corporate, and other special libraries. The clientele is largely rural with only a few medium and large cities, including Bloomington-Normal, Pekin, Peoria, Galesburg, Macomb, Monmouth, Jacksonville, and Quincy. Most of the public libraries in this sample serve small towns, many with a population of below 5,000 (56 of 79). The data for this study are based on spring 1999 surveys of users, librarians, mayors, and a cross-section of rural residents in Illinois.

The report begins with an examination of the types of services users seek from public libraries and the importance attached to these services. A total of 2,776 ALS library users completed questionnaires requesting information about priorities for library services and overall satisfaction. Users also estimated the dollar value of library services their families received during the past 12 months.

To determine the types of services provided, the 115 ALS library administrators were sent a mail survey and 79 (68.7 percent) responded. In addition to the services currently provided, special attention is paid to those that have increased or decreased in demand and additional services that librarians would provide if funds permitted. Changing demands for instruction on computers and Internet usage are of special interest, as are the types of services that would be reduced in order to reallocate funds to new technology. These services are compared with the relative importance placed on specific services by customers.

Attitudes of the general public about the value of public library services were collected from a statewide sample of rural Illinois residents – the Illinois Rural Life Panel — in spring 1999. Panelists were asked a variety of questions about public services, including libraries. The results are then compared with those of library users in the ALS.

Finally, a statewide survey of mayors in towns with populations between 5,000 and 50,000 was conducted in the winter of 1998/spring of 1999. This questionnaire asked whether, and how, public libraries are integrated into community development efforts in an information-based economy. If libraries are not active in the development strategies of the community, mayors were asked for the main reasons.

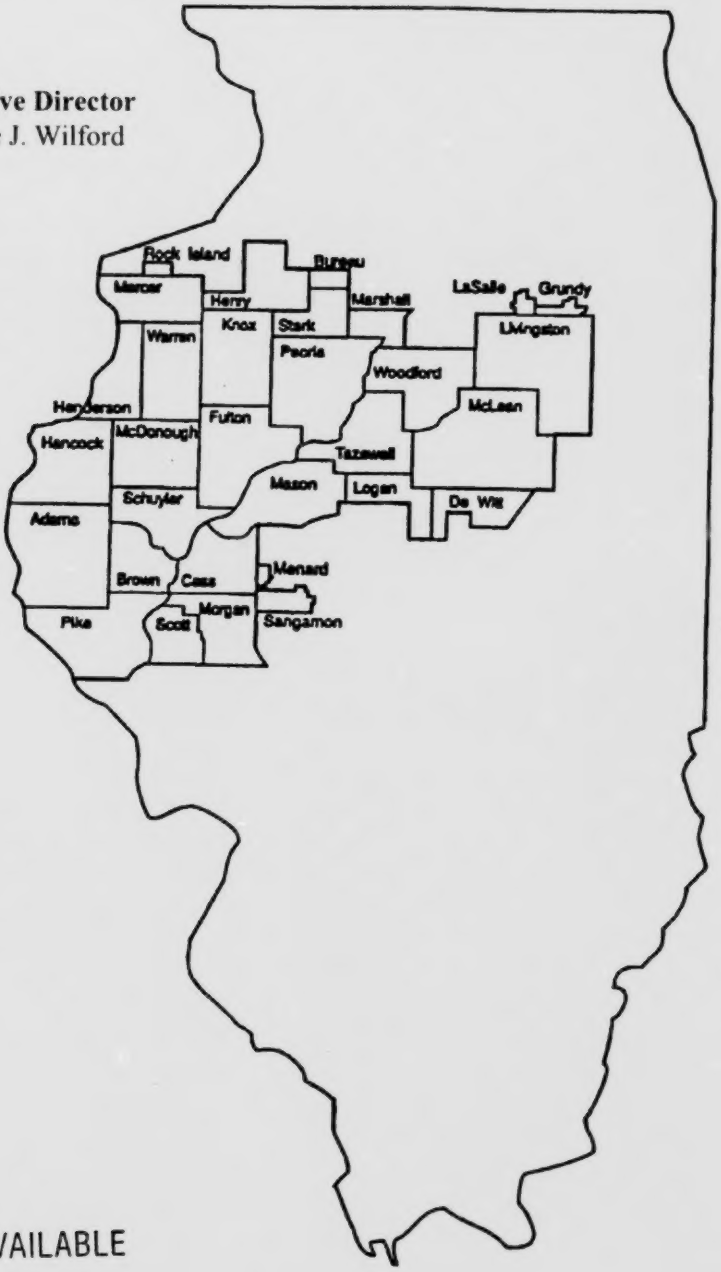
This research builds on earlier studies of public libraries in Illinois that examined involvement with community economic development initiatives (Illinois State Library 1997, Walzer and Gruidl 1997; Walzer and Stott 1998). Other studies on public library usage, especially for the traditional roles of providing reference materials, children's story hours, and summer reading programs have been consulted and used in this project (Holt, Elliott, and Moore 1999; McClure and Bertot 1998; Oppenheim 1986). Fewer studies, however, have focused specifically on ways in which libraries participate in supporting local economic development initiatives, even though libraries have certainly engaged in these efforts in recent years.

Profile of Sample

The library administrators in this study are mainly from small public libraries financed by either a single purpose district (62.8 percent) or a city government (21.8 percent). Statewide, 48.1 percent of the public libraries are financed by districts. Nearly three-fourths (72.7 percent) of the libraries in the sample reported serving a population clientele smaller than 5,000 residents, and only 5.2 percent serve a population of more than 25,000.

Figure 1. Alliance Library System

Alliance Library System



Executive Director
Valerie J. Wilford

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In many respects, the libraries in this sample are not the "typical" small town library nationwide because all public libraries in Illinois received a computer and modem through a state financed grant program in 1996. Many librarians throughout Illinois, and especially those in the ALS, have had three years of experience with the Internet, as well as the opportunity to participate in more than 200 Internet/computer classes during this time. In the survey sample, all responding library administrators reported a computer for Internet access in the library. Nearly four of five libraries (78.2 percent) reported providing public instruction on computer usage in the library, either currently or plans for providing the instruction in the near future.

A strong commitment to computer and Internet use in the library is shown by the 94.9 percent of responding library administrators who rated Internet access provided in the library as important and 81.8 percent who also rated instruction on safe Internet usage as important. Assistance with Internet use is of interest in this study because 36.1 percent of users are in junior high school or lower grades and 19.9 percent of users are retired. For different reasons, both groups are subject to scams and other hazards on the Internet. Assistance in the evaluation of Internet resources and helping to prevent Internet users from becoming victims are important services provided by the libraries. A recent Jupiter Communications survey of on-line consumers found that people trust on-line information as much or more than information disseminated by other types of media outlets. This is especially troubling for medical personnel who fear that the editorial content on drugstore sites could be slanted toward a specific product (Bannan 2000).

The ALS library users responding to the questionnaire fit a specific profile. Most are female (76.3 percent), 45.4 percent are between the ages of 31 to 50 years old, and 18.8 percent are 65 years and older. Relatively few respondents (6.3 percent) are full-time students. This is largely because users included in the survey are at least 17 years of age. Nearly three-quarters (72.0 percent) are married. The largest single group (39.0 percent) is employed full-time, 19.5 percent are employed part-time, and 24.4 percent are retired.

The majority of respondents (42.7 percent) reported an annual income between $25,000 to $50,000 in 1999, but nearly one in five respondents (17.5 percent) reported an income of less than $15,000. Nearly 50 percent of the 17- to 30-year-old group are in the less than $15,000 income bracket. At the other extreme, 25.7 percent of respondents reported an annual income of more than $50,000. These figures show that public libraries in this sample serve a diverse clientele with very different interests and needs.

The largest number of respondents (46.7 percent) use the public library weekly , while 19.8 percent reported biweekly use, 15.2 percent reported monthly visits, and 12.2 percent indicated occasional visits. Differences in extent of usage further support the diversity of interests among users.

The vast majority (78.2 percent) travel to the library using their personal vehicle and 10.5 percent walk. Based on responses, most users visit the libraries on weekday afternoons (46.5 percent) and weekday evenings (22.6 percent) but use patterns vary with age. For example, the 65 or older cohort (81.5 percent) mainly uses the library during the weekday morning/afternoon while only 50.5 percent of the 17- to 20-year-olds visit during this time period. The 17- to 20-year-old cohort is the main user on weekends (15.5 percent) which is consistent with school or job commitments. Those with incomes less than $25,000 typically use the library on weekday evenings and weekends.

A profile of users, the extent to which they use the library, and the times of day are important for examining attitudes about services provided, especially in assisting library administrators to determine the types of services preferred by the customers and when the peak demand periods are likely. Only with information such as this can library administrators effectively plan for service delivery.

Attitudes Toward Library Services in Rural Areas

Support for library services is especially important as public libraries move into new areas such as instruction on computer and Internet usage. Overall attitudes of the public in rural areas about library services, not only in ALS but across rural Illinois, are assessed using questions regarding library services included in the 1998-1999 Illinois Rural Life Panel (**Table 1**). Responses from 1,654 rural panelists, 88.1 percent of whom reported a public library either in the community in which they live or in a nearby community, serve as the database for this comparison. Statewide, 54.7 percent of the panelists reported a public library between 10 to 24 miles from where they live and 36.3 percent reported one between 5 and 9 miles from their residence. The statewide library standards in Illinois recommend a library no farther than 30 minutes in travel time for residents.

Approximately half (52.0 percent) of the respondents have a current library card (55.8 percent in ALS) and among those without a card, 75.5 percent realized that they are eligible (actually all are eligible to purchase a nonresident library card even if they reside in an area currently unserved/untaxed by public libraries).

ALS respondents are compared with those in other areas to determine whether the aggressive approach toward automation training followed by ALS makes a difference in customer satisfaction. Statewide, 59.8 percent reported using the public library, a percentage very close to that reported in the ALS (62.1 percent). Nationwide, two in three Americans go to the library each year (Speer 1995). Likewise, 13.6 percent of rural residents statewide reported using the public library weekly compared with 11.9 percent in ALS. An additional 18.5 percent statewide (18.7 percent in ALS) reported biweekly usage compared with 18.5 percent (19.3 percent in ALS) who reported monthly use.

Customers have many reasons for using a public library and librarians must recognize these demands in planning for service delivery (**Table 1**). Recreational reading was reported most often as a valuable service, both in the ALS survey (67.8 percent) and by the Illinois Rural Life Panel survey (67.1 percent), followed by locating reference information (49.1 percent) and gaining access to newspapers, magazines, and other periodicals (35.4 percent). Other purposes mentioned include using the copy machine (23.9 percent) and obtaining information for hobbies (24.7 percent).

Overall, public libraries have major public acceptance with 92.9 percent of respondents in the Illinois Rural Life Panel and 91.7 percent in the ALS reporting satisfaction with public library services. The range in responses regarding satisfaction was from 80 percent for those with less than high school completion to 94.3 percent for those with high school completion or a GED. For those with advanced education, the response was 89.7 percent for those with an associate's degree to 93.1 percent for those with some graduate work; however, the numbers of respondents in these cells are small, making generalizations difficult.

Differences in satisfaction are reported by income level. Respondents with incomes between $25,000 and $34,999 are most satisfied (95.4 percent) and those with incomes between $15,000 and $24,999 are least satisfied (86.7 percent). In either case, however, a high percentage of the clientele is satisfied with the services provided. Since only 316 Illinois Rural Life Panel participants responding to this question live within the ALS service area, many of the data cells are relatively small.

The large majority of rural users (90.6 percent) travel to the library building for services, rather than accessing the library holdings using a home computer (1.9 percent) or ordering items from other locations and picking them up at the local library (20.1 percent). The general public apparently has not adapted to computer technology as rapidly as has the library personnel, or perhaps the libraries have not made potential users aware of these services. Local library holdings may not have been computerized, since the small rural libraries are the last of the 115 ALS public libraries to become members of the Resource Sharing Alliance (RSA). As of 1999, of the nearly 300 ALS member libraries, 183 have added their holdings to the RSA database.

Table 1. Basic Library Information

	Alliance Library System		State Response		
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	
Is there a public library in your community?					
Yes	87.4	500	88.1	1,454	
No	12.6	72	11.9	196	
Don't know					
If no, approximately how many miles away is the nearest public library?					
0 - 4 miles	7.1	5	6.3	12	
5 - 9 miles	35.7	25	36.3	69	
10 - 24 miles	54.3	38	54.7	104	
25 - 49 miles	2.9	2	2.1	4	
Do you have a current library card?					
Yes	55.8	317	52.0	850	
No	43.8	249	47.6	778	
Don't know	0.4	2	0.4	7	
If no, are you eligible for a library card?					
Yes	75.9	176	75.5	551	
No	13.8	32	13.6	99	
Don't know	10.3	24	11.0	80	
Do you use the public library?					
Yes	62.1	348	59.8	970	
No	37.9	212	40.2	653	
If yes, how often?					
Once/week	11.9	39	13.6	124	
Twice/month	18.7	61	18.5	169	
Once/month	19.3	63	18.5	169	
Less than once/month	50.2	164	49.5	453	
How do you make use of the library?					**(Rank)**
Recreational reading	67.8	244	67.1	671	1
Locate reference information	51.9	187	49.1	491	2
Access to newspapers, magazines, or other periodicals	35.8	129	35.4	354	3
Gather information for my hobby	24.4	88	24.7	247	4
Use the copy machine	27.2	98	23.9	239	5
Information for my business	16.9	61	17.8	178	6
Children participate in summer reading programs	16.9	61	16.9	169	7
Other	9.7	35	9.1	91	8
Use the Internet	7.5	27	7.9	79	9
Attend meetings of social groups	5.8	21	7.4	74	10
Use a fax machine	4.4	16	5.1	51	11
Attend business meetings	3.1	11	4.8	48	12
Attend training programs	1.1	4	2.3	23	13
If these individuals, under age 18, do not use the library, why not?					**(Rank)**
Usually purchase reading materials	18.9	7	21.2	25	1
Use computer/Internet at home	18.9	7	20.3	24	2
School assignments do not require it	10.8	4	18.6	22	3
No programs offered for child's age group	10.8	4	9.3	11	4
Do not read books very much	13.5	5	7.6	9	5
Library does not have needed/enough materials	5.4	2	3.4	4	6
Library not open at convenient times	2.7	1	3.4	4	7
Programs offered at inconvenient times	0.0	0	1.7	2	8
Number of Cases		573		1,654	

Source: Illinois Rural Life Panel, 1998-1999 survey.

A majority of the ALS libraries have a Home Page, but the public is not yet using these sites to locate books as much as they could. For instance, only 2.2 percent of rural residents reported using the library's Home Page to access services. This may be an area in which additional local library training and/or promotion is warranted. Certainly, customers could obtain some services more easily by using the Internet. Use of the Internet to access library services will increase in the future as the general public gains familiarity with its potential and when projects such as the Virtual Illinois Catalog (VIC), which interfaces library catalogs across the state, are fully implemented.

Statewide, 40.2 percent of the Illinois Rural Life Panelists do not use the local public library and they were asked the reasons why family members, especially those under 18 years of age, do not. Responses were that the family usually purchases reading materials (21.2 percent), students use computers/Internet at home (20.3 percent), or classes in school do not require library assignments (18.6 percent). These reasons are largely beyond the control of public librarians.

Possibilities for expanding library usage by these families, with features directly under the control of the library were explored. Programs being offered at inconvenient times (1.7 percent), library not open at convenient times (3.4 percent), or an inadequate library collection (3.4 percent) are apparently not major issues preventing local use. These findings confirm those reported earlier that the vast majority of respondents are satisfied with public library services.

When the responses are classified by income — lower level (below $25,000) and higher income level ($25,000 and above) — higher income respondents (92.0 percent) are more likely to purchase reading materials and to use the computer/Internet at home (77.8 percent). This finding only makes sense and supports the notion that public libraries are of special importance for lower income residents.

In considering ways to stimulate library usage, administrators may wish to examine more closely the reported reasons for not using the library. For instance, the fact that the rural families surveyed reported purchasing reading materials probably reflects income status. There may be a significant number of families in a specific library's service area who cannot afford to purchase reading materials or are not inclined to do so. Children from these families represent a potential special audience for that public library which can be served when funds permit. This group could represent a justification for special collections or services. To maintain support for the library throughout the community, it is important that librarians meet the needs of a cross-section of residents, regardless of economic status and age. School assignments that do not require library research may reflect more about the school curriculum, rather than policies or opportunities in the public library.

The analysis of attitudes reported by rural residents in Illinois reveals several facts. First, the vast majority of residents are satisfied with services provided by the public library. Second, the libraries are reaching a relatively high percentage of the population and, for those who do not use the library, there is no indication that the library is at fault. As libraries provide more and more services using new technology, one might expect library usage to increase for certain types of services, including more training programs and helping customers evaluate the types of information being accessed.

ALS Library Users

Effective library programming accommodates the needs and preferences of potential customers within the resources available to the library. Professional standards or mandates by funding agencies are also important and sometimes may override perceived local needs to maintain the professional credibility of the library or to continue funding. Library administrators must continually balance these sometimes competing forces.

Public libraries serve many types of users, including small children learning to read, children seeking information for classwork, business owners seeking technical information, and recreational users such as retirees seeking information on hobbies or genealogy. Libraries are one of the few public educational agencies expected to fulfill the demands of lifelong learners; this is in contrast, for instance, with schools and higher education institutions that serve a more specific limited age range.

Computers and Internet access have greatly expanded the opportunities for libraries to serve these customers but they can only do so with adequate funds. Subscription fees for on-line electronic databases and other educational resources are expensive; however, with participation in group purchases provided by regional library systems, such as the ALS, small libraries can expand the services available to users at more affordable prices.

The diversity of customers and the wealth of information services now available through the Internet make effectively managing library service delivery much more complex. Librarians must have accurate user information about preferences for services and times of day with high service demand, as well as other customer characteristics. Some libraries regularly survey their customers to plan the delivery of services. Information is available from a variety of sources to assist in these efforts (Bleiweis 1997). Even if periodic surveys are undertaken locally, it is useful to compare those results with a larger sample. The information presented in this study can aid in those comparisons. Upon request, any public library participating in the current project can receive detailed information specific to their library. The information can then be compared with the summary data presented in this report.

Preferences Based on Outcomes

The types of library services ranked high in user value are identified using an in-library survey of ALS users conducted in March/April 1999. To organize the information in a meaningful way, library services were grouped into two broad types. First, a set of 18 services provided by public libraries that might directly impact customers financially or economically was included in the questionnaire. These questions include items such as the importance of library services in helping users or their families "become more productive on your job" or "learn about new jobs or other business opportunities."

In some instances, these questions included "research for classes to enhance job skills" or "to improve family members' grades in school" on the assumption that better performance would improve their economic status or pay. These questions focused more on the value of library services on *expected* or *intended outcomes* of customers (i.e., improving their economic status).

A second set of questions asked about specific services that public libraries provide for customers. These 26 questions ranged from "helping you find reference materials" to "library providing materials to teachers and students." These questions were designed to provide information to librarians regarding the *perceived value of services delivered*, rather than on the expected *outcomes* to customers. Librarians can use this information to determine which services are preferred by customers as the librarians reallocate resources to better meet customers' preferences. Combined, the two sets of questions can provide useful management information for public librarians — both those included in the study and those in other areas as well.

Library users were asked to rate each question on a five-point Likert Scale (1 is "not important"; 5 is "very important"). For convenience in exposition, the 44 questions were grouped into nine broad categories based on perceived use by customers. In some instances, the service could have been included in more than one category so the classification was partly arbitrary.

The service categories and average Likert Scale response include the following:

Library Service Category	Average Score
Public Relations and Customer Service	4.2
Interlibrary Loans	4.1
Children and Youth Services	3.8
Hobby and Leisure	3.7
Basic Reference Materials	3.6
Internet and Technology Services	3.2
Adult Programming	3.2
Employment and Workforce Development	3.1
Economic Development and Business Services	2.8

Public relations and customer service received the highest level of importance (4.2) by users. This category contains two questions: "library staff being knowledgeable and providing friendly service" and "publicizing library services and programs." The fact that this option is broadly stated and affects nearly every customer may contribute to the high importance and value attached to it. An earlier study by the Benton Foundation (1996) reported a similar finding: "[L]ibrarians almost universally were applauded for their kind, friendly, helpful, expert services. The idea that librarians would become 'information navigators,' equipped to help users travel the Internet, was a very appealing idea to these Americans" (55). It is very important for library administrators to understand that customers appreciate the friendly attitude and expertise of librarians. This finding underscores the importance of librarians participating in regular training programs to stay current on the latest developments.

Next highest in value is interlibrary loan service (4.1). Access to interlibrary loan privileges is especially helpful for small libraries with limited collections. Any library that can encourage users to access its Home Page to request a book via interlibrary loan can greatly increase not only the convenience of access but also the library's potential for meeting customers' needs. The ALS has made major strides in this type of service and clearly more will be done in the future. CARLWEB, the shared database of Alliance member libraries, is available on the Internet. It offers more than three million selections.

The only category that did not receive a rating greater than 3.0 was economic development and business services which ranked 2.8. This category includes ten separate questions, ranging from "providing local history materials for historic preservation or tourism projects" to "promote your existing businesses." The lower ranking may well reflect the fact that many users are not directly affected by some of the services cited, and, thus, they do not regard them to be as important as interlibrary loans or being able to interact with a competent and helpful librarian.

Examining the individual component questions in the economic development category reveals a wide difference in perception of importance. For example, "promote your existing business" received a ranking of 2.7 compared with the local history materials, which received a 3.8. Certainly, much of the importance and value placed on these services depends as much on the ability and experiences of the library in providing the services as it does on the interests and preferences of users. Larger libraries with a well-trained staff to offer these services will probably have a clientele that reports them as more important. (Readers interested in more detail on this question can consult library users' ratings of all 44 service categories in **Appendix A**.)

Aggregating responses to a Likert Scale does not necessarily reflect the intensity of preference for specific services because respondents can report several services as "very important," making it difficult to differentiate among them in terms of intensity. In a separate question, users were asked to rank the five most valuable services received from public libraries. The responses more closely reflect user preferences and provide insight into their thinking regarding important library services. These responses may not reflect the preferences of people who currently do not use the library and/or only use it infrequently, however; and these individuals are in the key target groups for expanded service delivery.

The responses to a question asking about the five most valuable economic-related services are shown below. Since each respondent reported five service categories, the total number of responses exceeds the number of users responding to the surveys. The responses show several attitudes of users. First, the range of services that users find valuable is diverse. Clearly, an opportunity to obtain interlibrary loans is important to the largest number of users (1,241). This is a service which totally depends on partnerships among consortia of libraries willing to share resources. It is also a service that requires considerable state support because library systems must support the automated infrastructure for interlibrary loan and they must provide the actual delivery system that operates across the entire state (**Table 2**).

Second in importance, as rated by number of users (32.9 percent), is improving family members' grades in school. Library services seem to be linked solidly with the educational process, certainly one of their main missions. The number of respondents reporting this service is small because many users in this sample do not have family members in school. More than one-third (39.0 percent) of respondents are over the age of 50 and are therefore unlikely to have children at home.

The library service reported third most valuable (31.2 percent) by users is to gain access to the Internet. This response may change markedly in the next several years for two reasons. First, each year people find more uses for the Internet whether for recreation, shopping, or communications. As this use grows, residents will look for inexpensive and easy sources of both instruction and use. Libraries will probably serve this purpose even more in the future.

New advanced telecommunications media will facilitate use of the Internet. Access through television, cell phones, or palm computers will also mean that once consumers are familiar and comfortable with a specific way to access the Internet they may rely less on the public library for access but actually rely on libraries more for training about search engines and authoritative and reliable sites. This will mean that libraries will have to provide more educational programs and have up-to-date computer programs.

In the survey, the importance of public libraries in helping users to "learn how to use the Internet" ranked lower (20.9 percent) than gaining access (31.2 percent). These two roles may reverse as computer costs moderate in the future, but at the time of this study (1999) only 63.9 million unique users were accessing the Internet. That number will increase rapidly as will the demands placed on libraries for educational programming and training in Internet use. Also true is that customers may have a computer but may not have the funds to purchase access to licensed products on the Internet. Libraries can provide this service.

There will always be a segment of society that simply cannot afford to obtain access to the Internet or pay the costs of using it extensively. This group will benefit most from an organized approach to training and access provided within public libraries. Currently, people with a college degree are 16 times more likely to have access to the Internet in their home than those with a elementary school education (NTIA 1999). Only 20 percent of children in homes with family incomes of less than $25,000 lived in a household with a computer. More than half of all children accessing the Internet used it at school and, of course, school computer labs are not usually available on evenings and weekends. In the past, libraries have traditionally played a role through which people who could not

Table 2. Rank the Five Most Valuable Services that You Receive from This Library

	Percent	Number
Obtain materials through interlibrary loan from other library	44.8	1,241
Improve family members' grades in school	32.9	911
Gain access to Internet	31.2	864
Read out-of-town newspaper and/or magazines	30.5	845
Other	22.4	621
Do research for classes you are taking to enhance job skills	21.8	605
Research prices or quality of items before purchasing	21.7	601
Learn how to use the Internet	20.9	579
Save personal or business time and effort	20.6	572
Locate local services through reference materials	18.8	522
Locate information about colleges or other educational opportunities	18.3	506
Become more productive on your job	16.4	455
Make better investment decisions	15.1	418
Learn new job skills or enhance job skills	13.0	360
Learn about new jobs or other business opportunities	8.2	227
Promote your existing business	5.8	160
Start your own business	5.5	152
Locate vendors for business products	4.5	124
Obtain a different job	4.2	115

n=2,776

Source: Questionnaire for Library Users (1999).

afford to purchase books could borrow them at low cost. A similar role will be played by libraries in addressing the "digital divide" issue. People of limited means will be able to access digital information and receive training through the public library.

The main point is that access is only one requirement. Understanding how to use the Internet and how to find useful information is also needed. Currently, the Internet search tools available are more likely to index commercial sites than educational sites. According to computer scientists at Princeton, no search engine indexes more than 16 percent of the Web. Yahoo, most students' favorite site, manages to search only 7.4 percent of all sites (*Nature* 1999). The role of the librarian as the knowledgeable intermediary to locating solid sources of information is not likely to change appreciably, at least until search engines improve markedly.

By Age. Responses regarding the importance of library services are examined by four age groups: (1)17 to 30, (2) 31 to 50, (3) 51 to 65, and (4) 65 and older (**Table 3**). Consistently, interlibrary loan access was reported as the most important of the services. It received an average of 4.0 by each group, except the 31 to 50 years age group when it averaged 4.1, where 5.0 is most important.

Improving family members' grades in school ranked second in importance among respondents in the 17 to 30 age category (3.5) and the 31 to 50 age group (3.9) but ranked much less important for respondents of 51 years and older. For those between 31 and 50 years, improving family members' grades was more important and ranked nearly the same as interlibrary loan access. Actually, the two are closely related since interlibrary loans enhance the materials available for students interested in improving their grades.

Reading out-of-town newspapers and learning to use the Internet were also important library services for users between 17 and 30 years of age. This is a broad age range with diverse interests and a more detailed examination might reveal different priorities by age. Respondents in their late 20s might possibly be more interested in using papers from other areas in job searches; however, this group overall did not report the library as an important way to learn about new jobs or business opportunities (2.9).

Retirees see libraries as an important way to read out-of-town newspapers and/or magazines. One might expect this group to use the library to keep track of places where they have lived or for other recreational reasons. The public library may be an important social meeting place and provide an opportunity for companionship for this age group.

Public libraries provide important information for buyers to evaluate quality of merchandise and prices before purchasing. This was true for all four age groups and the service was rated as a 3.3 or 3.4 across the board. Younger users rate this service slightly higher than older groups, however.

Some of the largest differences between how users at various age levels rate library services are found among school-related issues. Younger respondents rated using the library to do research for classes as more important than older groups. They also ranked learning new skills for job advancement higher, much as one might expect because most are in their working years. Other categories, such as using the library services to promote your business and locate local services, were ranked higher by younger users. Respondents consistently rated libraries as an important way to make better investment decisions.

By Income. Users were also grouped by four annual income categories: (1) less than \$15,000, (2) \$15,000 to \$25,000, (3) \$25,001 to \$50,000, and (4) over \$50,000 (**Table 4**) to help librarians assess how closely the current services delivered match the types of services desired by each of these groups. The average Likert rating was used for each service directly affecting the economic status of users to obtain a measure of the intensity of preference for each service. Overall, the results are consistent with earlier findings and are presented for each income group below.

Users with the lowest incomes reported interlibrary loans as most important (3.9), followed by improving family members' grades in school (3.6), and accessing the Internet (3.5). Closely

Table 3. By Age, Rate the Importance of Local Library Services in Helping You to . . .

	Age Category							
	17 to 30		31 to 50		51 to 65		65 or older	
	Mean	Number	Mean	Number	Mean	Number	Mean	Number
Obtain materials through interlibrary loan from other libraries	4.0	2,552	4.1	1,135	4.0	499	4.0	391
Improve family members' grades in school	3.5	2,451	3.9	1,120	3.1	480	2.7	330
Read out-of-town newspaper and or magazines	3.5	2,511	3.5	1,114	3.3	493	3.4	375
Gain access to Internet	3.4	2,505	3.6	1,139	3.1	495	3.0	347
Research prices or quality of items before purchasing	3.4	2,448	3.4	1,102	3.3	484	3.3	343
Locate information about colleges or other educational opportunities	3.3	2,447	3.5	1,124	3.0	467	2.8	338
Learn how to use the Internet	3.3	2,450	3.4	1,115	3.1	485	3.1	336
Save personal or business time and effort	3.3	2,448	3.3	1,121	3.1	473	3.0	339
Locate local services through reference materials	3.3	2,469	3.3	1,117	3.0	484	3.0	348
Become more productive on your job	3.2	2,486	3.2	1,135	3.0	486	2.8	336
Do research for classes you are taking to enhance job skills	3.2	2,435	3.4	1,121	2.9	483	2.5	315
Make better investment decisions	3.1	2,467	3.1	1,120	3.1	485	3.0	342
Learn new job skills or enhance job skills	3.1	2,444	3.1	1,118	2.9	480	2.6	328
Learn about new jobs or other business opportunities	2.9	2,487	2.9	1,131	2.7	492	2.5	333
Locate vendors for business products	2.9	2,407	2.9	1,093	2.6	468	2.7	332
Start your own business	2.7	2,438	2.7	1,121	2.5	479	2.3	325
Promote your existing business	2.7	2,425	2.7	1,119	2.5	474	2.3	313
Obtain a different job	2.7	2,462	2.6	1,124	2.4	484	2.3	327

Coding: 1=not important; 5=very important
n=2,776

Source: Questionnaire for Library Users (1999).

Table 4. By Income, Rate the Importance of Local Library Services in Helping You to . . .

	Income Category							
	Less than $15,000		$15,000 to $25,000		$25,000 to $50,000		Over $50,000	
	Mean	Number	Mean	Number	Mean	Number	Mean	Number
Obtain materials through interlibrary loan from other libraries	3.9	331	4.1	81	4.1	832	3.9	72
Improve family members' grades in school	3.6	314	3.6	78	3.5	805	3.7	69
Read out-of-town newspaper and or magazines	3.4	324	3.3	80	3.5	828	3.5	73
Gain access to Internet	3.5	317	3.0	78	3.4	823	3.3	71
Research prices or quality of items before purchasing	3.4	313	3.4	81	3.3	794	3.4	69
Locate information about colleges or other educational opportunities	3.4	312	3.3	80	3.3	797	3.3	67
Learn how to use the Internet	3.4	312	3.0	77	3.3	796	3.2	70
Save personal or business time and effort	3.2	313	3.2	77	3.2	797	3.5	67
Locate local services through reference materials	3.3	318	3.0	79	3.2	804	3.1	70
Become more productive on your job	3.1	315	3.3	79	3.0	807	3.2	72
Do research for classes you are taking to enhance job skills	3.1	310	3.1	80	3.2	795	3.3	67
Make better investment decisions	3.3	315	3.2	78	2.9	812	3.2	70
Learn new job skills or enhance job skills	3.1	309	3.3	78	3.0	801	3.1	71
Learn about new jobs or other business opportunities	2.9	317	3.0	80	2.8	810	2.9	72
Locate vendors for business products	2.9	300	2.9	78	2.8	790	2.9	67
Start your own business	2.7	313	2.8	77	2.6	792	2.6	71
Promote your existing business	2.7	309	2.7	80	2.6	789	2.5	68
Obtain a different job	2.7	315	2.7	77	2.6	803	2.5	71

Coding: 1=not important; 5=very important
n=2,776

Source: Questionnaire for Library Users (1999).

following were reading out-of-town newspapers, learning how to use the Internet, researching prices and quality of merchandise before purchasing, and locating information about colleges or other educational opportunities (3.4).

Respondents in the $15,000 to $25,000 income range also use the public library for interlibrary loans (4.1), to improve family members' grades in school (3.6), to research prices or quality of items before purchasing (3.4), to read out-of-town newspapers and magazines (3.3), to learn new or enhance their job skills (3.3), and to become more productive on the job (3.3). This income group also includes users who want to locate information about colleges or other educational opportunities (3.3) as well as to make better investment decisions and save personal or business time and effort (3.2). Included are both residents who are gainfully employed (44.6 percent), attend school (2.3 percent), or are unemployed (8.1 percent).

Respondents in the third income category ($25,000 to $50,000) include residents in the early stages of their careers (52.0 percent) as well as middle-age residents (20.9 percent) and retirees (16.6 percent). This diversity means that the average responses will disguise some preferences within the income category. Interlibrary loans remain an important service for these users (4.1), as do improving family members' grades in school and reading out-of-town newspapers and magazines (3.5). Learning how to use the Internet (3.3) and accessing the Internet (3.4) are also relatively important to users in this income category.

Researching prices and quality of items before purchasing (3.3), locating information about colleges and other educational institutions (3.3), and locating local services through reference materials (3.2) also rank among the more important library services for users in the $25,000 to $50,000 income category. Specific job-related services such as becoming more productive, learning about new jobs, and obtaining a different job were not rated quite as high in this income category as in some of the earlier groups, but the differences are not major. This income group also seems to see library materials as less important in making better investment decisions (2.9).

The fourth income group (over $50,000) includes older residents (9.9 percent) but not necessarily retired (16.0 percent). As is true with users in the other income categories, these users rate obtaining materials through interlibrary loan most important (3.9), followed by improving family members' grades in school (3.7), saving personal or business time and effort (3.5), and reading out-of-town newspapers and magazines (3.5). Researching prices and quality of items before purchasing is also important (3.4).

To summarize this section, only minor differences in how specific income groups rated library services were found. Obtaining materials using interlibrary loan was consistently named, by all income groups, as the most valuable service. Researching prices and quality of items before purchasing, saving personal or business time and effort, and improving family members' grades were valued highest by each income group.

Preferences for Specific Library Services

A second set of questions focus specifically on the types of services that libraries deliver, rather than on the outcomes that users seek. A total of 26 services were included on the questionnaire (**Table 5**) and users rated the services using the five-point Likert Scale mentioned above (1 = "not important"; 5 = "very important"). In some instances, the questionnaire items are service approaches or strategies used by library personnel.

This comparison is to provide librarians with information regarding which services users see as most important so that they can better customize services to specific groups. While this information can be helpful for management, it also can be used in training programs. Users are in general agreement about the importance of a knowledgeable staff that provides friendly service — 4.7 on a five-point scale with 2,568 respondents.

Table 5. Rank Each Library Service by Its Value to You

	Mean	Number	Rank
Library staff being knowledgeable and providing friendly service	4.7	2,568	1
Library providing materials to teachers and students	4.3	2,457	2
Obtaining books through interlibrary loan for you	4.3	2,527	3
Promoting the importance of reading and reading skills	4.3	2,493	4
Helping you find reference materials	4.2	2,581	5
Helping students find materials for class	4.0	2,445	6
Helping senior citizens find reading materials	3.9	2,512	7
Helping children find storybooks	3.9	2,494	8
Digitizing unique local historical materials before they deteriorate	3.9	2,423	9
Providing advice to fiction readers about next "best book" to read	3.9	2,509	10
Publicizing library services and programs	3.8	2,460	11
Providing literacy training programs	3.8	2,404	12
Presenting children's programs and story hours	3.8	2,464	13
Looking up answers for you	3.8	2,539	14
Providing local history materials for historic preservation or tourism projects	3.8	2,475	15
Library working with community groups to provide a community Internet site	3.7	2,411	16
Library making presentations to public groups	3.6	2,376	17
Teaching you to use library services	3.6	2,473	18
Providing business reference services	3.5	2,387	19
Answering reference questions by phone	3.4	2,477	20
Helping you use the Internet	3.4	2,440	21
Presenting adult programming	3.4	2,438	22
Library working with economic development groups	3.4	2,394	23
Helping you learn to use the computer	3.3	2,435	24
Staff working with civic groups	3.3	2,423	25
Arranging meetings in library for civic groups	3.1	2,417	26

Coding: 1=not important; 5=very important
n=2,776

Source: Questionnaire for Library Users (1999).

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By Age. Promoting the importance of reading and reading skills also ranked high (4.3) but the importance of this service declines with age from a high of 4.5 for the 31 to 50 year category to 3.8 in the 65 year and over group (**Table 6**). Providing materials to teachers and students ranked at a comparable level (4.3) but, again, declined with age of respondents. The same experience was reported for interlibrary loan assistance (4.3). Also ranked high was assistance with finding reference materials (4.2).

Helping children find books ranked fairly high, especially for the two younger age categories (17 to 30 and 37 to 50), but was rated noticeably lower among the two older groups (50 to 65 and over 65). Literacy training programs ranked 4.0 among the two younger age groups but dropped to 3.6 and 3.3, respectively, in the two older age categories.

Respondents in the youngest age group ranked a knowledgeable and competent staff as most important (4.6), followed by providing materials to teachers and students (4.4), promoting reading and reading skills (4.4), assistance in finding reference materials (4.3), and helping students find materials for class (4.3). Again, the preferences of users, at least by age, seem to be those services providing the most direct benefit to users.

As the age category increases, some slight shifts in the importance of services occur. Respondents between 31 and 50 years reported a knowledgeable and informed staff most important (4.7), followed by promoting reading, and providing materials to teachers and students (4.5), interlibrary loan (4.4), and assistance with reference materials (4.3). Helping children find books ranked somewhat lower (4.2), although it was at the same level as for the youngest age group. The age categories are somewhat broad and a narrower segregation might show more differences.

While a competent and knowledgeable staff ranked most important (4.7) for users between 51 and 65, second most important was obtaining interlibrary loans (4.4). Next in priority was providing materials to teachers and students and assistance in finding reference materials (4.1). The older age group rated direct assistance to children somewhat lower than the younger groups.

The elderly (65 years and older) also consider a knowledgeable and informed staff as most important (4.7) but reported interlibrary loans next in importance (4.2), followed by assistance in finding reference books (4.1), and helping senior citizens find reading materials (4.0).

A friendly and knowledgeable staff is important to a wider age range of respondents than any other library service. The scope of customer service is widely visible. Library users recognize this characteristic of library staff and rank it as valuable.

By Income. Similar comparisons of service characteristics are made for various income levels using the categories presented previously to help readers better understand the preferences of customers (**Table 7**). Major differences between the results tabulated by income and age do not exist perhaps because income and age are often correlated. Every income group rated a knowledgeable staff that provides friendly service as very important, although the numerical value placed on this attribute differs by income group. Because a knowledgeable staff was reported by each respondent group, it is not mentioned each time in subsequent discussions.

The lowest income group (less than $15,000) rated providing materials to teachers and students highest (4.4), followed by promoting reading (4.3), interlibrary loan access and assistance with reference materials (4.2), and helping seniors find reading materials (4.1).

Users with incomes from $15,000 to $25,000 report that providing materials to teachers and students is most important (4.3), followed by interlibrary loan assistance and promoting the importance of reading (4.2). Assistance with finding reference books also was considered important (4.0) by users in this income category.

Respondents in the $25,000 to $50,000 income group ranked providing materials to teachers and students, interlibrary loan access, and promoting the importance of reading important (4.3). This

Table 6. By Age, Rank Each Library Service by its Value to You

	Age Category							
	17 to 30		31 to 50		51 to 65		65 or older	
	Mean	Number	Mean	Number	Mean	Number	Mean	Number
Helping you find reference materials	4.3	386	4.3	1,143	4.1	509	4.1	395
Helping children find storybooks	4.2	384	4.2	1,148	3.6	487	3.2	337
Looking up answers for you	3.9	376	3.8	1,141	3.7	504	3.7	375
Answering reference questions by phone	3.7	379	3.5	1,126	3.2	493	3.2	345
Arranging meetings in library for civic groups	3.4	367	3.2	1,113	2.9	480	2.8	323
Presenting children's programs and story hours	4.1	382	4.0	1,138	3.4	480	3.2	331
Presenting adult programming	3.6	377	3.5	1,120	3.2	480	3.1	326
Helping you use the Internet	3.8	382	3.5	1,123	3.2	488	3.1	322
Teaching you to use library services	4.0	380	3.6	1,135	3.3	489	3.3	334
Staff working with civic groups	3.5	374	3.3	1,118	3.1	483	3.1	317
Helping you learn to use the computer	3.6	378	3.4	1,125	3.1	481	3.1	320
Helping students find materials for class	4.3	377	4.3	1,141	3.7	479	3.3	319
Helping senior citizens find reading materials	4.0	374	3.9	1,118	3.9	488	4.0	395
Library working with economic development groups	3.7	378	3.5	1,111	3.2	469	3.0	309
Promoting the importance of reading and reading skills	4.4	380	4.5	1,144	4.0	492	3.8	340
Providing literacy training programs	4.0	377	4.0	1,105	3.6	480	3.3	311
Library making presentations to public groups	3.8	373	3.6	1,101	3.4	464	3.4	315
Obtaining books through interlibrary loan for you	4.2	374	4.4	1,121	4.4	490	4.2	414
Providing advice to fiction readers about next "best book" to read	3.9	378	3.9	1,126	3.9	491	3.8	379
Providing local history materials for historic preservation or tourism projects	3.9	382	3.8	1,131	3.6	484	3.6	344
Publicizing library services and programs	4.0	376	3.9	1,128	3.7	477	3.7	344
Providing business reference services	3.9	369	3.5	1,109	3.2	472	3.2	314
Library staff being knowledgeable and providing friendly service	4.6	378	4.7	1,137	4.7	502	4.7	415
Digitizing unique local historical materials before they deteriorate	3.9	376	4.0	1,122	3.7	482	3.8	314
Library working with community groups to provide a community Internet site	3.8	376	3.8	1,115	3.5	478	3.6	318
Library providing materials to teachers and students	4.4	376	4.5	1,128	4.1	482	4.0	340

Coding: 1=not important; 5=very important
n=2,776

Source: Questionnaire for Library Users (1999).

Table 7. By Income, Rank Each Library Service by Its Value to You

	Income Category							
	Less than $15,000		$15,000 to $25,000		$25,000 to $50,000		Over $50,000	
	Mean	Number	Mean	Number	Mean	Number	Mean	Number
Helping you find reference materials	4.2	343	4.0	87	4.1	837	4.3	69
Helping children find storybooks	4.0	323	3.7	85	3.9	812	3.8	72
Looking up answers for you	3.8	332	3.5	88	3.8	826	3.7	70
Answering reference questions by phone	3.5	325	3.1	82	3.4	804	3.3	70
Arranging meetings in library for civic groups	3.1	314	2.6	81	3.1	783	3.1	66
Presenting children's programs and story hours	4.0	320	3.7	83	3.7	803	3.6	68
Presenting adult programming	3.4	317	3.3	83	3.3	791	3.3	67
Helping you use the Internet	3.5	323	3.2	81	3.4	800	3.2	67
Teaching you to use library services	3.7	327	3.0	78	3.5	800	3.6	71
Staff working with civic groups	3.4	318	2.9	80	3.2	786	3.2	68
Helping you learn to use the computer	3.3	321	2.9	83	3.3	789	3.2	67
Helping students find materials for class	4.0	316	3.9	81	4.0	802	4.0	69
Helping senior citizens find reading materials	4.1	332	3.6	86	3.9	821	3.6	72
Library working with economic development groups	3.4	310	3.0	81	3.3	776	3.3	68
Promoting the importance of reading and reading skills	4.3	325	4.2	84	4.3	810	4.3	69
Providing literacy training programs	3.9	314	3.7	81	3.7	781	3.5	68
Library making presentations to public groups	3.6	312	3.3	80	3.5	778	3.5	65
Obtaining books through interlibrary loan for you	4.2	340	4.2	85	4.3	824	4.1	68
Providing advice to fiction readers about next "best book" to read	3.9	329	3.7	82	3.9	811	3.9	75
Providing local history materials for historic preservation or tourism projects	3.8	319	3.4	82	3.8	803	3.7	71
Publicizing library services and programs	3.8	313	3.7	83	3.8	800	3.8	70
Providing business reference services	3.6	311	3.2	80	3.4	783	3.4	70
Library staff being knowledgeable and providing friendly service	4.8	342	4.7	84	4.7	842	4.8	73
Digitizing unique local historical materials before they deteriorate	4.0	312	3.5	81	3.8	787	3.8	67
Library working with community groups to provide a community Internet site	3.8	311	3.4	77	3.7	794	3.5	67
Library providing materials to teachers and students	4.4	316	4.3	80	4.3	808	4.3	72

Coding: 1=not important; 5=very important
n=2,776

Source: Questionnaire for Library Users (1999).

group is also concerned with having assistance in finding reference materials (4.1). While direct services to children ranked important (3.7), respondents were slightly less concerned with these services.

Respondents from the highest income bracket (over $50,000) ranked assistance in finding reference materials, promotion of the importance of reading, and having the library provide materials to teachers and students (4.3) as most important. Assistance with interlibrary loans (4.1) and helping students find materials for class (4.0) are also important to this income group.

Overall, while various groups differ in the relative rankings, they clearly place a high value on overall service by librarians and then select the types of specific services that they most directly benefit from on a regular basis.

Consistently ranked low by users are community service activities. Providing presentations to public groups, assisting with local economic development efforts, and business reference services were not rated as important by users in this study. There may be several explanations for these findings. First, it may be that these users simply do not know what the library has to offer in these areas. Second and more likely, respondents are not directly and immediately affected by these library programs and therefore do not consider them important uses of a librarian's time.

These results pose difficulties for librarians who must provide services that customers want and need but also must be sufficiently active in the community to gain support for their budgets. It is clear that users understand that librarians must publicize availability of services and programs. Publicity ranked well above public presentations and assistance with community and economic development programs.

Overall Satisfaction Levels

Overall satisfaction levels of library users are next compared with the importance attached to specific library services. The intent is to determine whether users who report low satisfaction differ in the type of services they value when compared to those who expressed high overall satisfaction with library services.

A satisfaction index was created using five questions: (1) whether the library adds to the quality of life, (2) whether it helps attract businesses, (3) whether it attracts and retains residents, (4) whether it improves student school performance, and (5) whether the user would pay more for additional library services. The responses (yes or no) to each question are summed to form the index with each component representing 20 percent of the total. The index can range between 0 and 100. Users are considered to have high or low satisfaction depending on whether they are above or below the original mean for the question.

A difference is noted between users reporting low satisfaction and high satisfaction on the question of whether Internet access is provided at the library. Overall, 97 percent of users reporting low satisfaction consider Internet access important. This response compares with 91.9 percent among users with high satisfaction levels. Since all libraries in this sample reported computers and Internet access, it may be that the staff in some libraries is just not as proficient in this service area. This interpretation is consistent with the high value placed on knowledgeable service reported previously. Users frequently have high expectations of librarians. When they experience frustration with Internet search engines, their requests for assistance, which are labor-intensive one-on-one instruction, may not always be met with current library staffing levels.

In addition, 30 percent of the users reporting low satisfaction indicated that the library does *not* provide instruction on computer use, compared with only 19.4 percent of the high satisfaction users. The main difference is that 61.1 percent of highly satisfied users reported libraries providing one-on-one computer instruction compared with 48.5 percent in libraries where users fit the low satisfaction profile.

The size of the library and its resource base appear to be factors in the overall satisfaction level of users. For instance, 81.8 percent of users in libraries serving less than 5,000 are in the low satisfaction group compared with only 18.2 percent in libraries serving 5,000 and more. The number of observations (libraries) in these cells is small, however, and generalization is difficult. It is most often small libraries that do not have sufficient computer-related training to meet the needs of users. It is the smaller libraries that stand to benefit most from improved interlibrary loan services made possible by FindIt! and the Virtual Illinois Catalog. The smaller, rural library will also benefit most from the full-text on-line products licensed by the Illinois State Library. An example is having access to up-to-date on-line medical resources, rather than having to replace expensive print versions of medical reference books only as frequently as their budgets allow. Also, the types of services provided by the regional library systems are of assistance to the smaller libraries.

The importance of Internet and computer instruction to satisfied users may be attributable to two factors: (1) the public now spends more time on both of these activities and requests assistance from librarians; and (2) the ALS, working with the Illinois State Library and the Office of Secretary of State, has promoted computer usage and Internet access in recent years, thereby encouraging librarians to expand and strengthen these services/programs and raise customer expectations.

Because the majority of libraries have not received increased funding nor added staff in recent years, expanding computer training and Internet usage has diverted time and resources from other services.[1]

Obtaining books through interlibrary loan was also reported by half of the library administrators as having experienced increases in demand recently. Interlibrary loan privileges greatly expand the capacity to access books and other materials for users, especially in small public libraries, and, as was shown earlier, is a popular service. This increase in interlibrary loans is supported by statewide statistics in Illinois that show a 54.7 percent increase in interlibrary loans provided — from 6.4 per capita in 1992 to 9.9 per capita in 1996. By not having to maintain as large a collection, library budgets can be reallocated to add more value to services provided. Well-trained staff can work with users to find resources to meet their needs and interests, whether it is recreational reading or finding reference information.

Value of Library Services

Library users in this sample definitely consider public library services important for the community. This is shown by 99.0 percent of respondents (2,554) reporting that libraries add to the quality of life in the community and 64.0 percent saying that libraries help attract businesses (**Table 8**). These findings are consistent with those of other groups such as the American Association of Certified Appraisers (AACA) which state that appraisers look to see if a community has a local library when assessing property values (Cooper and Crouch 1994). The AACA concludes that national studies show libraries, if maintained and administered well, increase property values in the community served.

The perceived value of a library in attracting businesses differs by age of users from a low of 47.4 percent in the youngest group to 76.5 percent among those 65 years and older. Relatively minor differences are reported in attitudes regarding the importance of libraries in attracting businesses, by income level, and these differences do not form a consistent pattern. For instance, 67.6 percent of the lowest income group and 68.5 percent of the highest income category view libraries as important, compared with 62.7 percent and 63.0 percent of the middle income groups.

The importance of a public library in attracting or retaining residents is even higher with 80.4 percent of users agreeing that a library helps in these efforts. It is interesting that libraries seem less important

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[1] In the past three years, FY94-95 compared with FY96-97, total operating expenses for the ALS member libraries has increased only 3.0 percent in inflation-adjusted dollars.

Table 8. Library Information

Question	Percent	Number
Do you think having a local public library . . .		
Adds to quality of life in the community?		
Yes	99.0	2,554
No	0.1	3
Don't know	0.9	24
Helps attract businesses to the community?		
Yes	64.0	1,615
No	9.0	228
Don't know	27.0	681
Helps attract or retain residents in the community?		
Yes	80.4	2,060
No	5.1	130
Don't know	14.5	371
Improves student school performance?		
Yes	96.2	2,459
No	1.1	29
Don't know	2.6	67

n=2,776

Source: Questionnaire for Library Users (1999).

for users between 17 and 30 (64.5 percent) compared with 86.3 percent for elderly residents, but with very little difference reported among the three age cohorts. This finding is consistent with the Benton Foundation finding that it is not until this younger age group becomes parents that they increasingly value library services (1996).

There is no doubt that library users see a direct correlation between library services and improved school performance with 96.2 percent responding affirmatively to this question with very little difference in response by age group. The importance of public libraries in contributing to better grades may also depend partially on the assignments given by teachers and upon the library facilities and library instruction provided in schools.

More variation regarding the importance of libraries is found when user responses are tabulated by income level. While 82.4 percent of the lowest income group and 81.3 percent of the highest income category see libraries as helping attract and retain residents, only 70.2 percent in the $15,000 to $25,000 group and 78.5 percent of the $25,000 to $50,000 income group reported in this way. A possible explanation is that lower income respondents are also young parents that value these library services highly. They may also be less likely to have the means to purchase books or own a computer.

Also worth noting are differences in the importance attached to the role of public libraries in improving student school performance. Overall, 96.2 percent reported a positive contribution of libraries. The highest income group reported 100 percent agreement that public libraries help improve students' grades in school, but only 95.3 percent of those with incomes from $15,000 to $25,000 did so.

Willingness to Pay for Improved Library Services. Given the perceived importance of library services to the quality of life in the community, the ability to attract and retain residents or businesses, and improvements in students' performance in school, users were asked if they would be willing to pay more for additional library services (**Table 9**). Nearly three-quarters of respondents (71.2 percent) responded affirmatively. Noticeable differences between income groups are reported with users from the highest income groups (77.8 percent) more likely to pay more than those in the lower three income groups.

It must be noted, however, that the respondents are all current library users rather than the overall population. Thus, it is more likely that respondents appreciate the contribution that a public library can make and are, therefore, more likely to support additional services.

In a related question, respondents were asked how much extra *per month* they would be willing to pay for *additional* library services (**Table 9**). Specific services were not stated; therefore, these estimates may understate the amount respondents would pay for certain types of services. Based on the total responses, 82.3 percent would pay between $1.01 and $3.00 *per month* and nearly one in five (17.7 percent) would pay less than $1.00 per month. Even at the lowest rate, the expressed willingness to pay more could represent a considerable increase in library revenues.

Overall, willingness to pay generally increases with age. Of some interest is that relatively little relationship is found between willingness to pay and income status with 82.5 percent of those making less than $15,000 willing to pay $1.01 to $3.00 per month compared with 83.9 percent of those earning more than $50,000.

Dollar Estimate of Value Received. To gain more precise assessments of the value of library services, respondents were asked to place a dollar estimate on the value of the library services received by users and their families in the past 12 months. The overall average response was $853, or more than $70 per month. Thus, being asked to pay an additional $1.00 to $3.00 per month may not seem like a large amount for many of these users. The dollar estimate increased with age from $846 for the youngest age cohort to $1,234 for those 65 years and older. This finding is interesting because respondents with higher income levels expressed a greater willingness to pay for additional services and the proportion of those responding also was substantially above the younger populations.

Table 9. Willingness to Pay for Services

Question	Percent	Number
Would you be willing to pay to have additional library services provided?		
Yes	71.2	1,513
If yes, how much additional per month would you be willing to pay for these services?		
Less than $1.00	17.7	292
$1.01 to $2.00	42.7	704
$2.01 to $3.00	39.6	654
If you were to place a dollar estimate on the value of the library services you and your family have received from the library during the past 12 months, what would it be?		
Mean *(not percent)*	$853	1,466
By category:		
Less than $100	14.2	283
$100 - $500	41.6	826
$500 - $1,000	10.6	210
More than $1,000	11.0	218
Priceless (from comment)	11.4	227
Unsure (from comment)	11.2	222

n=2,776

Source: Questionnaire for Library Users (1999).

The fact that some users gave responses that library services are "priceless" (11.4 percent) or that they are "unsure" (11.2 percent) of the value complicates estimating the value. It is clear, however, that the users responding to this survey placed a substantial value on the services received and that a high percentage reported that libraries are important in improving the quality of life.

To better understand who would pay more and to relate this willingness to the kinds of services considered important, the nine types of services described above are compared with willingness to pay (**Table 10**). This comparison generates several interesting findings. For instance, users of adult programs, including instruction on use of library services, making presentations to civic organizations, and related activities, were most likely (84.2 percent) to be willing to pay more. Users of economic development and business services were least willing to pay for additional services.

The relationship between value of services received and the types of services considered important was not established. Users who rated basic reference services as very important placed the highest annual dollar value on services received ($1,267). Internet and technology service users ($1,132) and those who value customer service ($1,068) were also substantially above the average in annual dollar value placed on services received. Thus, librarians trying to identify customers who place the highest dollar value on annual services received, or in other words those who feel they have received the most direct benefit from library services, might look to users of reference, Internet, and technology services.

This analysis should only be considered exploratory because the imprecise nature of placing the data in service categories could distort the comparisons. For instance, basic reference services are used mainly by 17- to 20-year-olds and those 65 years and older. At the same time, users of children and youth services appear to be in the young and higher income groups. Internet and technology services are concentrated in the 17 to 30 age groups. Perhaps the most significant finding is the diversity of customer interests and the value placed on services provided. Even though the desires of people who do not currently use public libraries were not included in this study, assessing this clientele is critical to helping expand the funding base for public library services.

The data in **Table 11** were developed to determine if a relationship exists between willingness to pay more for library services and only select services or whether the willingness to pay is across the board for all services. The average annual value placed on library services for the 305 respondents who said they would *not* pay more for additional library services was $752 per family, compared with an average of $783 for those who said they would may more. This difference of $31 per person is slightly more than $2.50 per month and was not statistically significant. Willingness to pay more for additional library services does not seem to be related highly to the perceived value of annual services provided to one's family.

Comparing the estimated dollar value of the library services provided in the past 12 months with attitudes about the contribution of the library to attracting or retaining residents shows that those placing a higher value on services received ($1,164) do not necessarily think that the library is important in attracting or retaining residents.

In comparing the dollar value placed on annual library services with whether or not users think a library helps attract businesses to the community, users who think the library is important in attracting business also placed a higher annual estimate on services actually received by their family (**Table 12**).

User attitudes concerning the importance of public libraries in attracting businesses (part of community and economic development) reveal that those who think libraries play a positive role also rated each of the nine categories of library services higher than users who think libraries play no role in community/economic development.

The differences in the importance of *each* service (Likert rating) between the two groups are significant in each case. The reported differences are consistent and, in each case, those willing to pay

Table 10. Library Users by Type of Service

Question	Type of Services									All Respondents	
	Internet & Technology Services	Hobby & Leisure	Children & Youth Services	Basic Reference Materials	Adult Programming	Economic Development & Business Services	Employment & Workforce Development	Interlibrary Loan	Public Relations & Customer Service	Percent	Number
					(percentages unless otherwise denoted)						
Would you be willing to pay to have additional library services provided?											
Yes	72.9	74.5	73.5	71.9	84.2	57.7	72.4	75.5	65.4	71.2	1,513
If yes, how much additional per month would you be willing to pay for these services?											
Less than $1.00	18.4	15.9	16.3	20.6	11.1	26.3	16.7	17.4	15.7	17.7	292
$1.01 to $2.00	38.6	27.3	42.6	48.2	38.9	26.3	45.8	40.3	49.7	42.7	704
$2.01 to $3.00	43.0	56.8	41.1	31.2	50.0	47.4	37.5	42.3	34.6	39.6	654
If you were to place a dollar estimate on the value of the library services you and your family have received from the library during the past 12 months, what would it be? *(mean)*	$1,132	$620	$597	$1,267	$292	$326	$556	$972	$1,068	$853	1,466

n=2,776

Source: Questionnaire for Library Users (1999).

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Table 11. Value of Services by Willingness to Pay

Question	Yes		No			Statistically
	Mean	Number	Mean	Number	t-Stat	Significant
If you were to place a dollar estimate on the value of the library services you and your family have received from the library during the past 12 months, what would it be?	**Question:** Would you be willing to pay to have additional library services provided?					
	$783	916	$752	305	0.244	no
	Question: Do you think having a local public library helps attract or retain residents in the community?					
	$791	1146	$1,164	73	-1.372	no
	Question: Do you think having a local public library helps attract businesses to the community?					
	$913	896	$807	135	0.343	no

n=2,776

Source: Questionnaire for Library Users (1999).

Table 12. Attraction of Businesses

	Do you think having a local public library helps attract business to the community?					
	Yes		No			Statistically
Level of Importance	Mean	Number	Mean	Number	t-Stat	Significant
Internet & Technology Services	3.34	1,499	2.92	224	4.606	yes
Hobby & Leisure	3.81	1,404	3.31	208	5.039	yes
Children & Youth Services	3.81	1,530	3.56	224	2.806	yes
Basic Reference Materials	3.71	1,586	3.21	224	6.730	yes
Adult Programming	3.41	1,471	2.79	217	7.111	yes
Economic Development & Business Services	2.99	1,544	2.46	226	6.848	yes
Employment & Workforce Development	3.26	1,564	2.80	227	5.870	yes
Interlibrary Loan	4.14	1,537	3.70	217	5.161	yes
Public Relations & Customer Service	4.29	1,535	3.84	221	6.946	yes

n=2,776

Source: Questionnaire for Library Users (1999).

more also rated the service more important. Customers appreciate and value the types of services provided rather than just supporting the general notion that a public library benefits a community.

The overall implications of these findings are that users who think that libraries can make a positive contribution to business attraction also rate the importance of *each* major type of library service higher. It is possible that they may be strong supporters of library services; however, supporters of library involvement in community activities do not necessarily estimate the overall value of current library services higher.

Importance Placed on Services. Further exploration of the data using tests of significant difference show that income groups differ regarding the importance assigned to various service categories (**Table 13**). Users were divided into two income categories: (1) less than $25,000 and (2) $25,000 or above. The mean responses of these users in terms of importance assigned to each of the nine major types of library services were then compared. Significant differences are found between income groups in attitudes for five major types of services as described below.

Users with less than $25,000 income rated Internet and Technology Services more important (3.48) than users with incomes of $25,000 or above (3.16). Basic reference services fit the same pattern with lower income users rating them as more important (3.73) compared with higher income users (3.56) The difference was statistically significant. Similarly, the importance of programs for adults was rated higher (3.44) among lower income users than for those with higher incomes (3.24). These figures make a strong case for the "digital divide" issue. Library services, especially those that depend on new technologies, are especially valuable to customers who may not have access to computers at home.

Economic development and business services were considered more important by lower income users (2.97) than those reporting higher incomes (2.83). Likewise, employment and workforce development programs were rated more important (3.34) by users with incomes of less than $25,000 than those above this income level (3.14) and the differences are significant.

These comparisons have several implications for librarians interested in reallocating resources or changing library programs. First, the main library audience in this study seems to be users with less than $25,000 income and they seem to place the highest value on library services.

Second, knowledgeable and friendly customer services rank highest for both income groups, followed by access to interlibrary loans, basic reference services, hobby and leisure activities, and children/youth services.

Frequency of Library Use. Library users in this sample were divided into two groups—those visiting the library weekly or biweekly and monthly or occasionally—then a test of significant difference between frequency of use and importance of service was conducted (**Table 14**).

Several results are worth noting: (1) frequent users placed a significantly higher estimated value on services received from the library during the past 12 months ($988 compared with $470); (2) when each service category is compared, in only three instances was a statistical difference found; and (3) frequent users rate a service as more important than infrequent users. The specific services include hobby and leisure (3.80 versus 3.51), interlibrary loans (4.13 versus 3.93), and public relations and customer services (4.28 versus 4.15).

Library Services and Impact on Community

Because libraries are often located downtown, library trips may involve other activities as well (Fitch and Warner 1997; McClure and Bertot 1998; Sawyer 1996). Knowing the purposes of these trips can help librarians plan hours of service to accommodate users. Given that most libraries are open six days per week and most evenings, not much time is left for adjustments in hours; however knowing the relationship between the importance placed on library services by customer groups may help in planning.

Table 13. Income by Level of Importance

Level of Importance	Income Less than $25,000		Income $25,000 or Greater		t-Stat	Statistically Significant
	Mean	Number	Mean	Number		
Internet & Technology Services	3.48	639	3.16	1,448	5.281	yes
Hobby & Leisure	3.77	588	3.69	1,346	1.312	no
Children & Youth Services	3.77	663	3.81	1,475	-0.685	no
Basic Reference Materials	3.73	685	3.56	1,502	3.438	yes
Adult Programming	3.44	625	3.24	1,426	3.505	yes
Economic Development & Business Services	2.97	666	2.83	1,478	2.653	yes
Employment & Workforce Development	3.34	678	3.14	1,495	4.042	yes
Interlibrary Loan	4.09	661	4.06	1,468	0.454	no
Public Relations & Customer Service	4.24	663	4.25	1,469	-0.184	no

n=2,776

Source: Questionnaire for Library Users (1999).

Table 14. Frequency of Library Use

Level of Importance	How Often Have You Come to this Library? Frequent User Mean	Frequent User Number	Infrequent User Mean	Infrequent User Number	t-Stat	Statistically Significant
Internet & Technology Services	3.24	1,695	3.28	715	-0.669	no
Hobby & Leisure	3.80	1,600	3.51	625	4.553	yes
Children & Youth Services	3.77	1,739	3.80	728	-0.510	no
Basic Reference Materials	3.62	1,792	3.60	750	0.523	no
Adult Programming	3.30	1,655	3.29	696	0.300	no
Economic Development & Business Services	2.86	1,743	2.88	738	-0.432	no
Employment & Workforce Development	3.18	1,775	3.18	737	0.041	no
Interlibrary Loan	4.13	1,744	3.93	725	3.882	yes
Public Relations & Customer Service	4.28	1,749	4.15	719	3.098	yes
If you were to place a dollar estimate on the value of the library services you and your family have received from the library during the past 12 months, what would it be?	$988	1,031	$470	379	2.961	yes

n=2,776

Source: Questionnaire for Library Users (1999).

Knowing that trips to the library are combined with customers doing other business in the city might allow librarians to cooperate with local businesses in the community on special events. For instance, 58.9 percent of respondents reported that library visits were made in conjunction with local shopping activities. Older age groups generally were more likely to coordinate these types of trips than younger respondents.

An article in the *Illinois Municipal Review* (Palma and Hyett 1999) suggests that libraries can become strong downtown anchors to draw people to the heart of communities. Written by the principals of a national consulting firm specializing in the economic renaissance of downtowns and older business districts, the article discusses the growing number of users visiting libraries annually. Three key reasons are given for this growth in popularity: (1) libraries are becoming wired with computers that have Internet access, (2) demographic shifts in the population, and (3) libraries serve as community gathering places that offer programming and entertainment. Research in British Columbia showed that 75 percent of library customers regularly combined trips to the library with purchases of goods and services ($500 to $600 annually) from retail stores close to the library (Fitch and Warner 1997, 11).

Library Administrators

Services provided by public libraries are determined by a combination of many different factors, including funding, staffing, perceptions of librarians about need, priorities of library trustees, the recommendations of professional organizations that set library standards, and the priorities of external granting agencies. The specific expertise and interests of public librarians also are important because they have the ability to decide how discretionary funds will be spent.

In this section, we examine how the services provided by public libraries in the ALS are changing, especially with respect to computer usage and Internet access. Responses from the 79 library administrators are presented with libraries sorted into two groups: (1) those serving a population of fewer than 5,000 residents and (2) those serving larger numbers. Respondents indicated whether the demand for each of the previously described list of 30 specific services *increased* or *decreased* during the past two years (**Table 15** and **16**). Not all library administrators answered this question so the responses do not apply to the complete sample.

Increases in Demand

The two services with the most increased demand according to library administrators are assisting customers to use the Internet (71.1 percent) and helping customers learn to use computers (64.5 percent) (**Table 15**). When results were compared between smaller versus larger libraries, 68.5 percent of library administrators serving populations less than 5,000 reported Internet use increasing, compared with 80.0 percent who reported an increase in larger libraries. Similar experiences are reported in terms of computer usage (53.7 percent for smaller libraries compared with 95.0 percent of larger libraries).

Librarians assist users to learn new computer applications for library use such as NoveList, FirstSearch, and on-line catalogs or to search the holdings of the library from the library system Home Page. While it is too early to tell the overall effects of this assistance, the productivity of users in library searches and data retrieval should increase, possibly reducing the time spent by librarians in finding routine information, allowing them to concentrate on more value-added complex searches.

In Illinois, the Virtual Illinois Catalog (VIC), a statewide library catalog searchable via the Internet, allows users to search the holdings in many libraries in the state. A project of the 12 regional library systems and the Illinois State Library, the VIC could greatly expand access, especially in rural areas. Combining VIC with the users' ability to access library holdings from home and order materials to be delivered at their local public libraries will probably most benefit rural customers.

Table 15. Which of the Library Services Have Seen Increased Demand on Staff Time During the Past Two Years?

	Library Population Served						
	Less than 5,000		5,000 or Greater		All Respondents		
Services	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Rank
Helping patrons use the Internet	68.5	37	80.0	16	71.1	54	1
Helping patrons learn to use the computer	53.7	29	95.0	19	64.5	49	2
Obtaining books through interlibrary loan	50.0	27	50.0	10	50.0	38	3
Learning new computer applications for library use	42.6	23	40.0	8	43.4	33	4
Helping students find materials for classes	35.2	19	15.0	3	28.9	22	5
Upgrading staff knowledge by attending continuing education classes	29.6	16	30.0	6	28.9	22	6
Presenting children's programs and story hours	22.2	12	25.0	5	23.7	18	7
Helping users find reference materials	27.8	15	10.0	2	22.4	17	8
Writing grants to supplement library budget	22.2	12	15.0	3	19.7	15	9
Publicizing library services and programs	16.7	9	20.0	4	18.4	14	10
Looking up answers for patrons	13.0	7	30.0	6	17.1	13	11
Staff taking time to provide friendly, knowledgeable service to customers	16.7	9	15.0	3	17.1	13	12
Teaching patrons to use library services	7.4	4	20.0	4	10.5	8	13
Fundraising to supplement library budget	9.3	5	15.0	3	10.5	8	14
Helping senior citizens find reading material	11.1	6	5.0	1	9.2	7	15
Answering reference questions by phone	7.4	4	10.0	2	7.9	6	16
Promoting the importance of reading and reading skills	5.6	3	5.0	1	6.6	5	17
Providing advice to fiction readers about next "best book" to read	7.4	4	5.0	1	6.6	5	18
Scheduling programming to be offered in library	5.6	3	5.0	1	5.3	4	19
Working with community groups to provide a community Internet site	5.6	3	0.0	0	5.3	4	20
Helping children find storybooks	3.7	2	0.0	0	2.6	2	21
Providing local history materials for historic preservation	1.9	1	5.0	1	2.6	2	22
Arranging meetings in library for civic groups	1.9	1	0.0	0	1.3	1	23
Upgrading staff skills in friendliness and customer service	1.9	1	0.0	0	1.3	1	24
Providing literacy training programs	1.9	1	0.0	0	1.3	1	25
Making presentations to public interest groups	1.9	1	0.0	0	1.3	1	26
Digitizing unique local historical materials before they deteriorate	1.9	1	0.0	0	1.3	1	27

n=79

Source: Questionnaire for Library Administrators (1999).

While understanding that the source of increased demand for library services is important, it is equally important to identify activities that have *not* experienced higher demands. A significant positive correlation is found between time spent on computer/Internet services and a variety of other public-related activities, including arranging meetings for public groups in the library, scheduling programs offered in the library, and making presentations to public groups. Some libraries have increased staff time devoted to a variety of public service activities but have not done so for economic development and working with civic groups outside the library.

Libraries in communities with the smallest population reported increases in public demand, include providing local materials for historic preservation, arranging meetings in the library for civic groups, upgrading staff skills in customer service, providing literacy training programs, making presentations to civic groups, and digitizing unique local historical materials. This comparison does not indicate that these services were actually reduced; rather, it suggests that, in some libraries, the demand for some services did not increase as much as for the more technology-oriented activities.

Previous comparisons showed that customers basically agree with the changes in services reported by library administrators, with the lowest support being for community service projects. A survey of municipal officials discussed later suggests that libraries are not perceived as very involved in economic development efforts in some small towns.

Decreased Public Demand

The demand for each library service will not increase at the same rate and, based on changes in interests of the public, the demand for some services may decline. Library administrators were asked to report public library services that had experienced a perceived decrease in demand in the previous two years (**Table 16**).

Literacy training programs (35.5 percent) and business reference services (33.9 percent) led the list of services for which perceived demand had decreased, followed by making presentations to public interest groups (29.0 percent). Arranging meetings for civic groups in the library (25.8 percent) and efforts by librarians to work with local economic development groups (25.8 percent) also reportedly had less demand. The relatively low level of importance assigned to these activities in the user survey is consistent with the perceived decline by library administrators.

We should note that these reductions are not reported by a majority of library administrators responding to the survey. The findings indicate that demand for these services remained constant or increased in more than half of the libraries. Based on closer examination, these are not necessarily the same libraries that reported increases in computer and Internet services. The state of the local economy could be a factor in the demand for literacy training and similar community programs.

Fundraising to supplement the library budget was reported in the declining demand category by 27.4 percent of library administrators. This is definitely a minority. Fundraising remains an issue, especially in small libraries. A substantial increase in private contributions has occurred in a few specific libraries in this sample. State allocations in the form of one-time competitive grants have been awarded to many libraries. Even relatively small libraries, such as Beardstown (pop. 5,270), have seen substantial infusions of funds for capital projects. This growth in one-time bequests and one-time state competitive grants awarded for specific projects could reduce the pressures on librarians to actively engage in local fundraising.

Table 16. Which of the Library Services Have Seen Decreased Public Demand During the Last Two Years?

	Library Population Served						
	Less than 5,000		5,000 or Greater		All Respondents		
Services	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Rank
Providing literacy training programs	33.3	15	43.8	7	35.5	22	1
Providing business reference services	33.3	15	37.5	6	33.9	21	2
Making presentations to public interest groups	26.7	12	37.5	6	29.0	18	3
Fundraising to supplement library budget	26.7	12	31.3	5	27.4	17	4
Arranging meetings in library for civic groups	24.4	11	25.0	4	25.8	16	5
Working with economic development groups	24.4	11	31.3	5	25.8	16	6
Answering reference questions by phone	22.2	10	25.0	4	22.6	14	7
Helping senior citizens find reading material	20.0	9	18.8	3	21.0	13	8
Working with civic groups outside the library	15.6	7	31.3	5	19.4	12	9
Looking up answers for patrons	15.6	7	25.0	4	17.7	11	10
Teaching patrons to use library services	15.6	7	18.8	3	16.1	10	11
Providing local history materials for historic preservation	13.3	6	25.0	4	16.1	10	12
Helping children find storybooks	17.8	8	0.0	0	14.5	9	13
Scheduling programming to be offered in library	15.6	7	6.3	1	12.9	8	14
Helping students find materials for classes	11.1	5	18.8	3	12.9	8	15
Providing advice to fiction readers about next "best book" to read	11.1	5	18.8	3	12.9	8	16
Presenting children's programs and story hours	15.6	7	0.0	0	11.3	7	17
Obtaining books through interlibrary loan	13.3	6	0.0	0	9.7	6	18
Helping users find reference materials	8.9	4	6.3	1	8.1	5	19
Promoting the importance of reading and reading skills	2.2	1	12.5	2	6.5	4	20
Upgrading staff knowledge by attending continuing education classes	6.7	3	0.0	0	4.8	3	21
Digitizing unique local historical materials before they deteriorate	6.7	3	0.0	0	4.8	3	22
Working with community groups to provide a community Internet site	4.4	2	6.3	1	4.8	3	23
Helping patrons learn to use the computer	4.4	2	0.0	0	3.2	2	24
Learning new computer applications for library use	4.4	2	0.0	0	3.2	2	25
Helping patrons use the Internet	2.2	1	0.0	0	1.6	1	26
Upgrading staff skills in friendliness and customer service	2.2	1	0.0	0	1.6	1	27
Publicizing library services and programs	2.2	1	0.0	0	1.6	1	28
Writing grants to supplement library budget	2.2	1	0.0	0	1.6	1	29

n=79

Source: Questionnaire for Library Administrators (1999).

Services if Staff and Funds Were Available

Library budgets are often inadequate to provide the levels of service that library administrators would like to offer. The fiscal pressures on libraries are generally recognized. According to McClure and Bertot (1998),

> Demand for computer resources in most libraries has outstripped supply and more resources are desperately needed for continuous upgrading and maintenance of technological resources. All libraries would benefit from increased staffing to handle the overwhelming amount of new work that technology improvements have precipitated. (20)

Computers, software purchases, training activities, and accessing the Internet are costly. It is not sufficient just to have a computer and Internet access. Training programs and technical assistance are usually required as well.

To gain more insight into perceived needs for library services, we asked which services library administrators would provide if more funding and staff were available. Libraries are separated into the two size groups reported previously (**Table 17**). Overall, responding librarians (56.8 percent) identified helping patrons use the Internet as most important with slightly different ratings reported by size of library. The largest libraries, 5,000 and larger (63.2 percent), rated helping users learn computers as the highest priority, followed by Internet training (57.9 percent). One of the newest initiatives by the Secretary of State/State Librarian is to offer apprenticeships/grants for students to act as technology tutors and trainers in libraries.

Next highest (39.2 percent), in both size groups, is to schedule additional program offerings in the library. These programs might include civic and/or economic development groups and may suggest that some of the cutbacks reported earlier may have resulted from financial pressures on the library, rather than changes in library priorities. At the very least, the responses suggest that some library administrators recognize the need for broad programming in the community.

Expanding children's programming also was rated important by some responding library administrators (29.7 percent). Examples show how public libraries subsidize the education of K-12 students (McClure and Bertot 1998), and it is clear that the customers in this survey believe as most Americans do in the educational role of libraries (Estrabrook and Horak 1992). There is strong evidence that Americans see using the library as part of their parenting role and that library services to children command enormous public support (Benton Foundation 1996).

Based on responses, library administrators are aware that services must be marketed to the community. Potential expansions in publicity about library services and programming were reported by 23 percent of responding libraries as something they would do if resources were available. Along with better marketing, a desire to promote the importance of reading and library skills was mentioned by more than one in five library administrators (21.6 percent).

Table 17. If You Had More Staff or More Funds, which Public Services Would You Increase in Response to Local Public Demand?

	Library Population Served						
	Less than 5,000		5,000 or Greater		All Respondents		
Services	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Rank
Helping patrons use the Internet	56.6	30	57.9	11	56.8	42	1
Helping patrons learn to use the computer	41.5	22	63.2	12	45.9	34	2
Scheduling programming to be offered in library	35.8	19	47.4	9	39.2	29	3
Learning new computer applications for library use	28.3	15	36.8	7	32.4	24	4
Presenting children's programs and story hours	30.2	16	31.6	6	29.7	22	5
Upgrading staff knowledge by attending continuing education classes	26.4	14	31.6	6	27.0	20	6
Publicizing library services and programs	24.5	13	21.1	4	23.0	17	7
Promoting the importance of reading and reading skills	24.5	13	15.8	3	21.6	16	8
Providing literacy training programs	17.0	9	15.8	3	16.2	12	9
Writing grants to supplement library budget	17.0	9	10.5	2	14.9	11	10
Making presentations to public interest groups	15.1	8	5.3	1	12.2	9	11
Providing advice to fiction readers about next "best book" to read	15.1	8	5.3	1	12.2	9	12
Digitizing unique local historical materials before they deteriorate	15.1	8	5.3	1	12.2	9	13
Working with community groups to provide a community Internet site	9.4	5	21.1	4	12.2	9	14
Helping users find reference materials	9.4	5	10.5	2	10.8	8	15
Fundraising to supplement library budget	9.4	5	15.8	3	10.8	8	16
Providing local history materials for historic preservation	9.4	5	15.8	3	10.8	8	17
Teaching patrons to use library services	5.7	3	15.8	3	8.1	6	18
Working with civic groups outside the library	9.4	5	5.3	1	8.1	6	19
Providing business reference services	3.8	2	21.1	4	8.1	6	20
Looking up answers for patrons	3.8	2	10.5	2	5.4	4	21
Helping senior citizens find reading material	3.8	2	5.3	1	4.1	3	22
Upgrading staff skills in friendliness and customer service	3.8	2	5.3	1	4.1	3	23
Arranging meetings in library for civic groups	3.8	2	0.0	0	2.7	2	24
Helping students find materials for classes	3.8	2	0.0	0	2.7	2	25
Working with economic development groups	3.8	2	0.0	0	2.7	2	26
Staff taking time to provide friendly, knowledgeable service to customers	0.0	0	10.5	2	2.7	2	27
Helping children find storybooks	1.9	1	0.0	0	1.4	1	28
Obtaining books through interlibrary loan	1.9	1	0.0	0	1.4	1	29

n=79

Source: Questionnaire for Library Administrators (1999).

Time Spent on Services

Library administrators reported the staff time currently devoted to each of the library services listed in the study (**Table 18**). This question reflects the views of library administrators about the demand for services since deployment of staff corresponds to perceived priority of service. User demands are closely mirrored in the allocation of staff time reported by library directors. Ranked most important, using a five-point Likert Scale, is staff providing friendly, knowledgeable service. This priority conforms exactly with what customers rated as their highest preference. A Benton Foundation study reported that Americans trust their librarian and count on this person to provide personal guidance to books and information (1999).

The second most important use of staff time is helping students find materials for classes, followed by obtaining books from the interlibrary loan for users. Next is helping users find reference materials and presenting childrens' programs and story hours. While the specific order may not be the same, it is clear that, overall, the services for which library administrators report spending staff time correspond with the same services that customers consider important.

Most of the tasks listed as a low priority are public and business outreach programs. For instance, listed 30th is working with economic development groups. The low relative position of this task could be simply that librarians have not been contacted about working on these projects or that they do not have time to devote to these efforts. Given the relatively high importance of libraries in attracting and/or retaining residents and businesses reported earlier, the overall public might gain from increased involvement.

Second lowest (29th) is providing literacy programs. The fact that one in five Illinois residents is functionally illiterate and given the importance of a highly skilled workforce for economic development, public libraries could be major contributors in this area, especially in situations where no other agencies provide these services.

Also listed as low in staff time commitment are digitizing unique local historical material before they deteriorate (28th), arranging meetings in library for civic groups (27th), working with civic groups outside the library (26th), making presentations to public interest groups (25th), providing business reference services (24th), and fundraising to supplement the library budget (23rd).

Perceptions of Mayors

Staff involvement with local groups in activities outside of the library vary by location and are determined partly by the interest of local public officials and other organizations. These activities can help build local support from city councils or other organizations, especially if library personnel are seen as actively supporting the community. Thus, perceptions by local public officials regarding library involvement matters, particularly when officials desire an active community involvement role for library personnel.

Recently, a national survey was conducted to determine the perceptions of local public officials regarding the contributions of libraries to the community; local governments in Illinois were examined separately (Illinois State Library 1997). Specifically, library directors and local officials in 191 randomly selected communities were surveyed in 1995 on a variety of issues. Libraries were compared with other public agencies in terms of value received for the public expenditure, responsiveness to customers, and other issues.

Of special interest to the current project is a question regarding the responsiveness of libraries to the needs of citizens. In the Illinois-specific results within the national survey, 69 percent of library administrators reported that the library was "higher" or "much higher" in responding to citizen needs than other city services. Local public officials (chief executives and budget officers), on the other hand, were less complimentary. Only 32 percent reported that libraries were "higher" or "much higher" in their responsiveness to citizens than other city agencies (Illinois State Library 1997, 5).

Table 18. Rank Each Library Service by the Amount of Staff Time Devoted to it

	Mean	Number	Rank
Staff taking time to provide friendly, knowledgeable service to customers	4.6	79	1
Helping students find materials for classes	4.2	79	2
Obtaining books through interlibrary loan	4.1	77	3
Helping users find reference materials	3.9	79	4
Presenting children's programs and story hours	3.7	79	5
Looking up answers for patrons	3.5	79	6
Helping patrons use the Internet	3.5	69	7
Helping children find storybooks	3.3	79	8
Helping senior citizens find reading material	3.3	77	9
Promoting the importance of reading and reading skills	3.3	77	10
Learning new computer applications for library use	3.2	78	11
Publicizing library services and programs	3.1	78	12
Helping patrons learn to use the computer	3.1	76	13
Providing advice to fiction readers about next "best book" to read	3.0	73	14
Writing grants to supplement library budget	3.0	79	15
Upgrading staff knowledge by attending continuing education classes	2.9	77	16
Teaching patrons to use library services	2.8	78	17
Upgrading staff skills in friendliness and customer service	2.7	79	18
Answering reference questions by phone	2.7	79	19
Scheduling programming to be offered in library	2.6	77	20
Providing local history materials for historic preservation or tourism projects in community	2.2	75	21
Working with community groups to provide a community Internet site	2.1	61	22
Fundraising to supplement library budget	1.8	68	23
Providing business reference services	1.8	72	24
Making presentations to public interest groups	1.8	73	25
Working with civic groups outside the library	1.7	73	26
Arranging meetings in library for civic groups	1.7	63	27
Digitizing unique local historical material before they deteriorate	1.6	40	28
Providing literacy training programs	1.5	55	29
Working with economic development groups	1.3	65	30

Coding: 1=not much time; 5=much time
n=79

Source: Questionnaire for Library Administrators (1999).

On a related question, contribution of the library to individual or community well-being compared to an *ideal public library* for this community, libraries fared much better with 85 percent of librarians reporting that libraries are "high" or "very high" and 82 percent of local officials responding the same way. Thus, it appears that the expectations for contributions of libraries to the community business or well-being are not as high as for other city agencies.

The LRC survey also suggests a difference in perception about how informed librarians are regarding local politics. For instance, when respondents were asked about the level of understanding of local community politics (local library compared with an ideal library), 60 percent of the librarians in Illinois rated their knowledge as "high" or "very high" compared with 40 percent of the local officials responding in the same way. This 20 percent gap suggests that librarians may need to learn more about local politics or become more involved. The burden of educating public officials about the value of the library rests on library administrators and stronger efforts in this direction might benefit a library in the long run.

To gain insight into perceptions regarding the importance of libraries in community development activities, several questions were placed on a 1998-1999 Institute for Rural Affairs statewide survey of Illinois mayors in cities with populations larger than 5,000. Statewide, 220 mayors responded, including 18 in the ALS. All responding cities in the ALS contain a library which, in 50 percent of the cases, is financed by the city government. Most other libraries (37.5 percent) are financed by library districts (**Table 19**).

Providing information is the mainstay of a library and it only makes sense that public libraries can make major contributions to local development efforts either by direct involvement or by providing information for local public officials in order to position the community for economic expansion (Jeong 1990). In the survey of Illinois mayors, the potential for public library *holdings and materials* was separated from *involvement by library personnel* to more clearly identify opportunities for participation in development efforts.

Among the mayors in the ALS answering a question about whether library personnel actively participate in local economic development efforts, only three cities (17.6 percent) responded affirmatively. This level of response is lower than the statewide results in which 21.8 percent (45 mayors out of 206 mayors) responded; however, the number of mayors who responded in the ALS region is small and the results may not represent those of nonrespondents.

The apparent relative inactivity of libraries in direct development activities should not be confused with the notion that libraries make little contribution to community development. Providing computer access and instruction to residents interested in improving their skills and finding better jobs is very important but may not be perceived as direct involvement in economic development activities. In 1999, the Peoria City Council appropriated $20,000 more for computers to supplement the library budget so that increased access could be provided for youth and residents seeking to improve their economic status. Since Peoria has access to full-time economic development professionals to market the city, there may be less need for direct involvement by the library.

Many library administrators, especially in small libraries, may not have the skills, staff time, budget, or sufficient materials to actively participate in development efforts or they may not have been asked. Each community's needs are different and whether the librarians participate directly in economic development efforts or, instead, focus on services that enhance the ability of residents to improve their economic status depends on the specific situation.

When pressed for more details about why library personnel are not more active in business recruitment efforts, 36.4 percent of the ALS mayors reported that assistance is not needed. While this condition may be accurate, it may represent lost opportunities for both the library and the city in an information age. Examples of successful direct involvement by librarians in community development

Table 19. Role of Library in Community Services

	Alliance Library System		All Respondents	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Is there a public library in your city?				
Yes	100.0	18	92.7	204
No	0.0	0	7.3	16
If yes, is the library financed by...				
City?	50.0	8	38.3	74
Library district?	37.5	6	57.5	111
Other?	12.6	2	4.1	8
Do library personnel actively participate in local economic development efforts or provide relevant information used in economic development efforts?				
Yes	17.6	3	21.8	45
No	82.4	14	78.2	161
If the library is ***not*** involved directly in city development efforts, is it because . . .				
Library is run by volunteers/part-time staff with no knowledge of development	18.2	2	8.1	12
Library personnel have shown no interest	9.1	1	20.3	30
Mayors do not know about library materials available	18.2	2	10.1	15
Library assistance is not needed	36.4	4	33.1	49
Other	18.2	2	12.2	18
Is the public library a significant part of the city economic development program?				
Yes	11.8	2	13.3	28
No	88.2	15	86.7	183
Will library services contribute to the city marketing plan in the future?				
Yes	43.8	7	42.1	80
No	56.3	9	57.9	110
If no, what is the main reason?				
City economic development plan is not information-based	0.0	0	5.0	5
Library and/or staff not informed about economic development approaches or issues	25.0	2	31.7	32
Library staff not interested or willing to assist in development efforts	0.0	0	3.0	3
Economic development plan for city is not definite at this time	12.5	1	12.9	13
Library facilities not large enough to support economic development efforts	25.0	2	11.9	12
Other	25.0	2	10.9	11
Selected more than one option	12.5	1	23.8	24

Source: IIRA / IML Municipal Questionnaire (1999).

exist in Illinois and they show that libraries can gain support from residents during these activities (Walzer and Stott 1998).

Statewide, 20.3 percent of responding mayors reported that library personnel had shown no interest in participating in community development efforts and 10.1 percent reported that they (mayors) did not know if the library resources are available. This finding may indicate to library administrators the need to market their services or holdings more aggressively to elected public officials.

Mayors were then asked whether public library services, *per se*, are a significant part of city economic development efforts—namely, are library services used in business recruitment efforts? Mayors both statewide and in the ALS (88.2 percent and 86.7 percent respectively), overwhelmingly reported no. These findings are in contrast with a majority of the library users who reported that the public library is, or could be, a significant asset in attracting and retaining both residents and businesses. They also contrast with the American Association of Certified Appraisers findings that property values increased in communities served with properly maintained libraries.

Information was also collected on development-related services available in the public library (**Table 20**). Most libraries in our sample are small with a limited range of specialized services. The primary community development services provided by libraries include interlibrary loans (84.0 percent), public Internet access (80.8 percent), space for community meetings (71.5 percent), a section on business materials (64.7 percent), and a public fax machine (44.3 percent). Less common specific services include housing economic development information (30.2 percent), serving as a community training center (11.6 percent), and hosting training programs for businesses (10.6 percent).

Some of these services are relatively technical and, for example, may require several computers for a training center. While the library could serve as a site for training, library buildings may require upgrades in wiring and new or reorganized space to accommodate a training center. Expanding library services along these lines would probably require additional financial support from the city or other agencies.

The fact that library administrators and users did not rate direct involvement in economic development efforts as a high priority does not mean that libraries are not an integral part of community development. Much of the training on computers and Internet access have a community and economic development dimension. This view is confirmed by the fact that responding mayors reported these two library services as economic development assistance. Thus, libraries are supporting local development efforts indirectly through the services that have expanded most in recent years.

An important but unexpected finding is that responding mayors did not know whether the library provides certain services. For instance, 34.7 percent of mayors reported no knowledge of whether the library contained city economic development information such as the DCCA city profile and market analyses. This is surprising because aggressive local development efforts should market the community in as many ways as possible and libraries are a logical place to house this information. It involves minimal cost to the library and can provide access for a variety of users during hours when other development agencies are closed.

Statewide, 36.0 percent of responding mayors did not know whether the library has a fax machine available for public use, 27.9 percent did not know whether the library maintains a section including business materials, and 28.1 percent are unaware of whether the library serves as a training center. Library administrators interested in expanding services might consider including more community development resources and activities in their budget proposals.

A larger proportion of responding mayors reported that library services will be included in the city marketing plan *in the future* (**Table 19**), although both statewide and in ALS the percentages are still below half (42.1 percent and 43.8 percent, respectively). When asked why libraries will not be included, the largest number (31.7 percent) responded that library personnel are neither informed nor

Table 20. Which of the Following Services Does the Library Provide?

	Alliance Library System		All Respondents	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Houses local economic development information such as brochures and market analyses?				
Yes	25.0	4	30.2	61
No	56.3	9	35.1	71
Don't know	18.8	3	34.7	70
Public Internet access?				
Yes	70.6	12	80.8	164
No	17.6	3	5.9	12
Don't know	11.8	2	13.3	27
Hosts training programs for businesses?				
Yes	6.3	1	10.6	21
No	62.5	10	64.8	129
Don't know	31.3	5	24.6	49
Provides space for community meetings?				
Yes	66.7	12	71.5	148
No	22.2	4	15.9	33
Don't know	11.1	2	12.6	26
Provides public access to fax machines?				
Yes	64.7	11	44.3	90
No	17.6	3	19.7	40
Don't know	17.6	3	36.0	73
Maintains a section on business materials?				
Yes	56.3	9	64.7	132
No	12.5	2	7.4	15
Don't know	31.3	5	27.9	57
Serves as a community training center?				
Yes	6.3	1	11.6	23
No	68.8	11	60.3	120
Don't know	25.0	4	28.1	56
Locates and loans materials from other libraries?				
Yes	76.5	13	84.0	173
No	5.9	1	2.9	6
Don't know	17.6	3	13.1	27

Source: IIRA / IML Municipal Questionnaire (1999).

interested in economic development efforts. This perception may not be correct but it should alert library administrators about how they are perceived in the community. Better communication and marketing may be needed for perceptions about librarians to change. Several mayors (11.9 percent) also reported that library facilities are not adequate to support economic development efforts.

Making Local Contacts

The results from Illinois respondents in the national LRC study show a distinct difference of opinion regarding who initiates interactions between library administrators and local public officials. Two-thirds (66.3 percent) of responding library directors statewide reported that the interactions are most often initiated by the library; however, a much smaller number of city/county CEOs (42.5 percent) and financial officers (42.0 percent) agreed. Closer correspondence was found in response to the option "both about equally" with 33.1 percent of librarians, 45.0 percent of city/county CEOs, and 38.7 percent of financial officers reporting this response. This comparison may suggest opportunities for librarians to be more active in contacting local public officials.

The American Library Association's Planning for Results program can help in this regard by encouraging library administrators to consider their diverse customers, undertake a community analysis, and design a strategic plan (Himmel and Wilson 1998). In Illinois, some librarians have participated in the MAPPING the Future of Your Community, a community strategic visioning plan conducted by the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs. These activities involve commitments of time by librarians but they can help them understand community issues and identify ways to serve their markets better. Both libraries and the community can benefit from this greater involvement.

Examples of local involvement include the Ashland Public Library District that participated in their community's MAPPING process. That library has succeeded in promoting the Edgar Site M recreation area on the community Home Page, attracting hunters from many states. The Galesburg Public Library and the Peoria Public Library have recently completed the ALA Planning for Results program.

Looking to the Future: Making the Transition

At the close of the twentieth century, library services in Illinois are being delivered in enhanced and rapidly changing ways. Customers are learning how to access information using new and diverse media. The pace of change for customers and libraries must be in sync to provide maximum benefit to customers and to keep libraries at the forefront of the "knowledge revolution."

Several survey questions, posed to both library customers and librarians, asked about service enhancements and improvements expected in the future. This section examines library administrators' visions for the future. Discrepancies between the pace of changes made by libraries to keep up with evolving information delivery systems and customers' needs are of special interest. Model solutions to future issues have been taken both from the professional literature (Benton Foundation 1996 and 1999; Bleiweis 1997; Weingand 1997 and 1998) and from practices followed by 115 public libraries operating as a consortium in the ALS. These solutions may provide insights on alternatives that local libraries should consider.

Service enhancements suggested in library literature cover a range of issues, including better cooperation among libraries, more efficient information retrieval systems, improved marketing, stronger subsidization of the formal education sector, willingness to partner in economic revitalization projects, assistance in training and retraining the workforce, greater accountability to taxpayers, and provision of more computer resources (Estrabrook and Horak 1992; Fine 1990; Holt, Elliott, and Moore 1999; Kraushaar and Beverley 1990; McClure and Bertot 1998; Sawyer 1996; Schuman 1990; Speer 1995; Welch 1994). Certainly not all of these options are needed in every small rural library but, in examining ways to serve customers better, library administrators can gain insights into how they might improve service delivery.

Respondents expressed satisfaction with current library services in both the library users survey and the Illinois Rural Life Panel survey which included both library users and nonusers. This was in response to a question regarding service enhancements. Twenty-seven percent of library users gave either a compliment or a satisfactory statement, rather than suggesting improvements. This finding confirms similar results of a national study, *The Future's in the Balance: A Toolkit for Libraries and Communities in the Digital Age,* completed by the Benton Foundation (1999). The study concluded that the library profession is "ahead of the curve" in accepting new technologies.

Respondents in the Benton Foundation study expressed ambivalence about libraries changing too rapidly—that is, replacing books with computers (1999). Customers' concerns that traditional services might disappear tempered their enthusiasm for the spread of the digital revolution to libraries. The public, in both the current study and the Benton Foundation study seemed to want reassurance that a balance will be struck between traditional collections and computers. They expressed a strong preference for a library environment with "high tech tempered by high touch" and a balance of books and bytes.

Service Enhancements

Given the diverse wishes expressed by the clientele of the ALS libraries, finding a balance between high tech and high touch services is one of the most difficult challenges facing rural libraries. This is especially difficult for the smaller libraries in the study. The have limited staff and fiscal resources to provide alternative services.

The need to balance high tech and high touch services was also a major finding in the Benton Foundation research. Based on their research, the Benton Foundation (1999) encouraged libraries to do the following:

- Balance the message about new high tech services with messages about the traditional high touch services. Libraries must be portrayed as high touch first and high tech second.
- Emphasize the ability of the librarian to be an information navigator, helping customers learn to use the new technology and to differentiate between authoritative and non-authoritative sources.
- Recognize the powerful connections Americans make between libraries and effective parenting;
- Root all discussion of technology in books and reading.
- Emphasize that the library you trust can help you make the transition to technology.

The customers in the ALS sample clearly indicated preferences for a wide range of library services that are both "high touch," such as children's story hours and one-on-one student assistance, as well as new "high tech" applications, such as library Home Pages that can be accessed from home. Customer preferences varied with age and income level, as well as by the types of services which they use. Some of the specific types of service enhancements that customers requested are presented below.

Two questions were included on the ALS survey: one asking about other services that users would like to see offered and the other asking which of the current services users would like to see improved. These are reported as two separate issues that library administrators should consider in planning programs of service and establishing budget priorities.

User Requests for Other Services. Library customers report basic satisfaction with current services, since 27.6 percent responded that they are satisfied and did not recommend additional services (**Table 21**) when responding to an open question about additional services desired. The percentage of respondents in each category is not large. The two largest groups of library users prefer more programming for both youth and adults (19.8 percent) and increases in the entire library collection (17.4 percent).

The desire for an expanded collection involved mainly users in the $15,000 to $25,000 income range. Increased collection size was also most often requested (29.3 percent) in a question about current

Table 21. Library Services

	Percent	Number	Rank
What other services would you like to see offered at this library?			
Satisfied/compliment/none	27.6	308	1
Programming (children, adult, summer)	19.8	221	2
Increase collection	17.4	194	3
Computers/hardware/software/network/classes	8.9	99	4
Internet	8.9	99	4
Other	5.9	66	5
Expanded services	5.2	58	6
Unsure/do not know	4.6	51	7
Extended hours	3.8	42	8
Equipment	2.8	31	9
Public relations	2.4	27	10
Electronic references, catalog, checkout	2.2	25	11
Construction/renovation/remodel	2.0	22	12
Quiet Areas/reading rooms	1.9	21	13
Increased service area	1.7	19	14
Interlibrary loan	1.3	15	15
Bookmobile/services for shut-ins	1.1	12	16
What current library services would you like to see improved?			
Increase collection	29.3	337	1
Satisfied/compliment /none	27.0	310	2
Computers/hardware/software/network/classes	9.4	108	3
Extended hours	7.7	89	4
Internet	6.9	79	5
Programming (children, adult, summer)	6.9	79	5
Other	6.5	75	6
Expanded services	4.2	48	7
Unsure/do not know	3.0	35	8
Electronic references, catalog, checkout	2.5	29	9
Construction/renovation/remodel	2.4	28	10
Public relations	2.1	24	11
Interlibrary loan	1.8	21	12
Quiet areas/reading rooms	1.8	21	12
Increased service area	1.5	17	13
Equipment	1.4	16	14
Bookmobile/services for shut-ins	0.2	2	15

n=2,776

Source: Questionnaire for Library Users (1999).

services to be improved. This concern was especially important for customers in the middle-income range at libraries serving less than 5,000. This issue, of course, demonstrates the importance of interlibrary loan services in enabling greater access to both reference and recreational reading materials—especially in small libraries. More access to the Internet and to computers was desired by 8.9 percent of users. This study was conducted when the State of Illinois was just beginning to provide full-text electronic resources to every library in the state. Librarians in the sample indicated that they believe that the public was only just beginning to recognize the difference in reliability between licensed on-line resources and generic Internet sites.

Improvements in Current Services. When asked about current services that should be improved, customers (17.2 percent in libraries serving populations more than 5,000 and 13 percent in libraries serving populations less than 5,000) suggested expanded or enhanced collections. Users see this as the most desired improvement. One strategy for libraries may be to expand their publicity about interlibrary loan access and the availability of full-text electronic databases that could perhaps meet the needs of certain customers.

Expanded computer access and classes ranked as the next highest requested improvement but only at 4.6 and 4.9 percent of customers, followed by extended library hours (4.5 percent and 2.8 percent, respectively). The percentage of respondents in these cells is relatively small. Given the differences among libraries in computer access and training provided, each library administrator must examine the local situation.

The Illinois Rural Life Panel respondents (**Table 22**), both library users and nonusers, suggest improvements, including more programs for youth (17.2 percent) and adults (14.1 percent), more access to computers (17.9 percent), more current recreational reading and hobby materials (15.7 percent), and more information on job opportunities and careers (15.6 percent). These requests for improvements were made within an overall satisfaction rating of 92.9 percent for both users and nonusers (91.7 percent for those living within a library district).

The few suggestions from customers for service improvements make anticipating future needs more difficult for public librarians. They must monitor trends and plan effectively to keep libraries vital and useful for regular users as well as the community in general: "With the rate of change increasing and new developments continually eclipsing older technologies, we live in a world in which libraries may—or may not—have a desirable future" (Weingand 1998, xi). The challenge is to seek out effective avenues the library can use to identify and respond to community needs.

With so little pressure from library customers for new services, library administrators may have to adopt the philosophy of Amazon.com creator Jeffrey Bezos (Time magazine's "Man of the Year"): "You invent for the customer. It's not their job to invent for themselves." Library customers may not be ready or able to envision the library as it will need to be in the future. The positive findings mentioned in this section of the report are based on comments from library users and the Illinois Rural Life Panel respondents; the concerns expressed earlier by mayors should also be taken into account, however. More discussions with customers and client groups may be warranted for library administrators to accurately assess needs for change.

Options for Enhancing Services

Librarians have several options for enhancing services desired by users while remaining within existing budgets. One of the most effective approaches may be to build on technological advances that permit high-quality service delivery. Many of these technological advancements have high fixed costs but, fortunately, state and federal governments have actively invested in the basic information infrastructure in recent years. The following section summarizes the service responses reflected in the open survey question to library administrators about new library initiatives they have begun in the past two years to gain public support.

Table 22. What Are the Most Important Ways You Would Like to See the Library Change?

	Alliance Library System		All Respondents	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
More current recreational reading or hobby materials	16.7	60	15.7	157
Information on job opportunities and careers	12.8	46	15.6	156
More access to materials in other libraries	12.2	44	12.3	123
More assistance in finding library materials	6.4	23	6.3	63
Better seating, lighting, or work space	11.1	40	8.7	87
More space for programs or meetings rooms	4.4	16	6.3	63
More programs for youth	13.1	47	17.2	172
Open more hours	21.1	76	25.3	253
More current newspapers and magazines	6.7	24	8.3	83
More information about my community	7.2	26	6.4	64
More help with the Internet	9.7	35	10.6	106
More access to computers	15.6	56	17.9	179
Access to more videos	13.1	47	11.7	117
Distance learning classes available	6.9	25	7.1	71
More programs for adults	12.5	45	14.1	141
Ability to search library's catalog with home computer	16.7	60	16.1	161
Other	6.9	25	8.2	82
Are you satisfied with the services the library provides?				
Yes	91.7	311	92.9	885
No	8.3	28	7.1	68

Overall, n=1,654; ALS, n=573

Source: Illinois Rural Life Panel, 1998-1999 Survey.

Offer Interlibrary Loan Via the Internet. A feasible alternative to expanding the collection size, as requested by customers, is to utilize and promote interlibrary loan. Access to a large collection is available by viewing the shared holdings of ALS libraries via the Internet using CARLWEB. The holdings of nearly 200 libraries linked to the ALS Home Page are available. This approach can be used by any member of a regional library system in Illinois. Building the membership and holding records in this shared database during the past 15 years has enabled ALS customers to choose from the holdings of many libraries. ALS, for example, has more than three million selections available to users. This collection is three times larger than the current access to one million titles offered by major bookstores in the area.

Continuing commitment by Illinois legislators and the Secretary of State/State Librarian is vital to helping Illinois libraries share their resources. For instance, Illinois ranks second in the U.S. in interlibrary loan activity. Interlibrary loan activity has increased nearly 10 percent annually in recent years with 1997 being the last year for which data are available (Illinois State Library 1998). The strong LLSAPs (Local Library System Automation Programs) across Illinois, which make interlibrary loan possible, have been funded by the state since 1968, making shared databases of library holdings in Illinois commonplace in the 1990s.

Innovations in Illinois library service continually build on the solid foundation currently in place in the existing 12 Illinois regional library systems. Illinois, with a strong commitment to regional, multitype library systems and the sharing of resources, is a model of efficient use of funds expended on library resources. Illinois is poised for even greater statewide service enhancements. Technology has been developed by the Illinois State Library and the regional library systems to link each of the 12 individual library system databases into one statewide interface: the Virtual Illinois Catalog (VIC). Mounting all of the individual library holdings available into one "virtual catalog" offers Illinois residents a service not yet developed in most other states. The VIC is available for searching from the homes of customers who have Internet access. Although residents can locate materials and determine the shelf status of holdings, they currently must go to their local library to borrow these items. Plans are in development to add an electronic interlibrary loan order form to VIC. The backbone of servers at the 12 regional library systems and the main server in Springfield will accommodate shared licensing of digital products that individual rural libraries can only afford at the reduced rates offered by statewide and consortia negotiations.

Illinois was one of the first states to offer FirstSearch, with its multiple databases and indexes, and NoveList through a statewide-negotiated agreement. Many full-text items from FirstSearch can be downloaded to customers' computers, but some electronic products have license agreements that allow the products to be available for use only within the library. NoveList is a reader's advisory tool for identifying fiction items by genre and/or other customer-specific criteria. ALS librarians have received training and have honed their search skills on these products for five years (FirstSearch) and one year (NoveList).

Increase Awareness of Home Pages, On-Line Catalogs, and Websites. An increase in library hours was the service improvement most often requested by rural residents, both library users and nonusers, responding to the Illinois Rural Life Panel (**Table 22**). More than a quarter of those surveyed (25.3 percent) asked for extended service hours. Hiring the additional staff to keep libraries open longer hours without additional funding is unlikely. Libraries with Home Pages can extend access. Having the resources of the library searchable from home computers allows customers to be sure a given library has the desired resources available when the customer does make the trip to the facility. Library databases and Home Pages, once on the Web, are available 24 hours a day/seven days per week (24/7).

Although 16.1 percent of respondents to the Illinois Rural Life Panel survey would like to access the library's catalog from their home computer, currently only about 2 percent of these rural residents used the library Internet Home Pages or the community networks created by their small public libraries in the past three years. In Illinois, regional library systems and the State Library have played a major role in coordinating shared database development. Library catalogs, as well as community network information, are housed on regional library system servers. This service is especially helpful to smaller libraries in communities that typically have neither the expertise nor the budget to maintain major computer capacity.

From an economic development perspective, a library with access to a consortia server can also host a community Home Page and train community business leaders about website development. Within the ALS, 45 libraries have had three years of experience with creating Internet content. The Hometown Countryside Connection (HCC), funded by a grant from the Secretary of State, allowed these 45 libraries to teach businesses and other agencies within their communities how to create and maintain websites. More than two million hits were recorded during 1998 and 1999 on the HCC sites. Community Home Pages and information are coordinated, housed on the regional library system server, and marketed as one integrated product through the HCC project. Essential training for community organizations in Web page development is also provided.

The fact that responses from rural residents suggest such a serious gap between services available and public awareness of the library Home Pages and community networks created with library grants suggests that better marketing of library Home Pages and community networks may be necessary. Customers' desires for increased service hours and in-home catalog searching could be satisfied if customers were more aware of the Home Pages and networks.

Marketing library products, services, and Home Pages can be coordinated at the regional library system level. For example, the ALS convenes the public relations/marketing specialists from its largest libraries to plan coordinated marketing efforts that can then be joined by even the smallest library system members who may not have the staff time or training to mount such specific publicity campaigns alone.

One example of a group publicity campaign used to increase public awareness of library Home Pages and community networks is a coordinated marketing campaign for the VIC. Marketing and promotional materials for VIC and FindIt! were created by the Illinois State Library and distributed to local libraries by regional library systems. Another example of a coordinated marketing effort is "Partners in a Great System," a publicity campaign highlighting the availability of interlibrary loan, a service identified as one of the most valuable by customers in this sample. "Partners in a Great System" used life-sized pigs to gain media attention to promote interlibrary loan and other services that libraries provide via partnerships. The two promotional activities used as examples began just after the rural residents and library customers had completed the surveys for this study.

Because it is not common knowledge that librarians are well-trained on Internet usage, the ALS has issued press releases about librarians who have taken continuing education classes. Librarians send these press releases to the local media to help market their expertise. Only if the public recognizes the value-added expertise of librarians will people turn to them with questions about searching the Internet efficiently for the most authoritative sources.

Marketing audits, of which the surveys in this study are one element, can be conducted across the customer base of the entire regional library system to reveal broad trends. Individual library results from the 2,776 customer surveys will also be reported to each library for more specific local marketing planning. These activities are probably beyond the resources of libraries operating alone, but are possible when libraries pool resources and cooperate in projects with their library system.

Provide Internet Access and Instruction. Library customers overwhelmingly requested instruction on safe and appropriate use of the Internet (90.9 percent) and reported that it was important to provide Internet access in public libraries (91.5 percent). This finding is international and mirrors closely a finding that Canadians view public libraries as the country's top site for Internet access (Rogers 1999).

Meeting the desires of customers for increased Internet access and instruction will involve substantial costs to public libraries. A 1996 survey in *Library Journal* reported an incredible 43 percent increase in technology-related expenses from 1994-1995 to 1995-1996 for the 400 libraries responding (St. Lifer 1997). A 1997 *Library Journal* survey of 352 public libraries nationwide disclosed that public libraries had seen their technology-related costs skyrocket by almost 85 percent in the previous two years. Nearly four of ten respondents to the *Library Journal* survey said that they have reduced spending in other areas to fund Internet-related initiatives. Sixty percent of libraries surveyed had aggressively pursued funding from outside sources to pay technology bills. Typically, it is the smaller libraries that do not have sufficient staff for grant writing or ambitious fundraising campaigns to supplement their budgets for increased technology expenses.

Traditionally, libraries have provided tools to find information and instruction in how to use those tools effectively (Weingand 1997, 162). Library users in this sample decisively (90.9 percent) asked to be taught how to use the tools of information retrieval. This finding shows that staff time must be allocated to more customer training on these techniques. This is not a new role for librarians, just new tools to be taught as more library resources are stored on computers. In most instances, librarians must learn effective use of the tools first by attending continuing education courses offered by their regional library system. As the transition to digital information storage continues, instruction for both library personnel and the general public will be required.

Recall that all of the library administrators responding to the current survey reported Internet access at their library, mainly because all Illinois libraries received a computer with modem from the Secretary of State/State Librarian in 1996. The current sample of library administrators is a group of "early adopters" who have each had e-mail accounts, provided by their regional library system, since 1995. Much collaboration goes on daily among library directors across the 14,000 square mile service area of ALS via the special e-mail interest group discussion lists set up and maintained by the system. Examples include the digitization interest group, the youth services interest group, the e-rate interest group, the reference discussion group, the legislative alert discussion group, as well as others. Librarians in the system regularly query each other when they need help on especially difficult reference questions or are considering offering a new program, for example.

When library administrators reported the top uses of the Internet in their libraries, based on a Likert scale, use by the library staff for reference (3.9) and for interlibrary loan (3.9) was exceeded only by recreational uses by the general public (4.2) (**Table 23**). Usage by schoolchildren doing class assignments ranked equal to usage by library staff (3.9). Most libraries responding to the survey provided Internet access to their staff for several months prior to offering it to the public. In general, this made library staff more experienced than the public, except schoolchildren, on Internet usage.

The ALS is making a major effort to address Internet issues. Extensive training continues to be offered to educate librarians to use Internet resources as reference sources, since one estimate is that between 30 percent and 50 percent of reference queries are currently answered using the Internet (Ross 1999). The ALS is simultaneously balancing its Internet focus among (1) creating Internet content, (2) training on Internet searching, and (3) using the Internet as a reference resource.

In terms of Internet content development, the Home Page for the regional library system offers many links and features, one of which allows members to register for continuing education courses on-line, as well as to conduct on-line catalog searches. Currently an e-book beta test is available on the system Home Page as well. A group of ALS libraries offers e-books to customers under an agreement negotiated by the regional library system for its members.

Many librarians in the ALS consortia have experience in creating Web content from local historical documents. ALS has involved a group of member libraries in the "Early Illinois Women" project that

Table 23. Who Are the Main Users of the Computer(s) in Your Library?

	Mean	Number	Rank
Recreational users for variety of purposes	4.2	77	1
Schoolchildren for class assignments	3.9	79	2
Library staff for interlibrary loan questions	3.9	78	2
Library staff for answering reference questions	3.9	79	2
Hobbyists looking for Internet information	2.9	73	3
Internet users interested in current events	2.5	73	4
Summer educational and reading programs	2.3	69	5
Residents interested in genealogy	2.1	77	6
Business people for business-related uses	1.7	74	7
Retired people for personal communication	1.6	72	8
Internet as communications center for businesses	1.2	68	9
Locally elected officials for research purposes	1.1	77	10

Coding: 1=not frequent; 5=very frequent
n=79

Source: Questionnaire for Library Administrators (1999).

digitized many one-of-a-kind historical documents featuring women in Illinois' history. In further developing Internet content, another group of ALS libraries was awarded one of only 41 federal Leadership Grants from the Institute for Museums and Library Services. This project digitized and placed on the Web other historical Illinois documents in the "Illinois Alive!" project.

Each of these highly technical and innovative Internet-based projects had an element that is high touch and this component was incorporated into the Internet project because of the findings of the Benton Foundation study (1999). Remember that library customers in ALS also requested a balance of high touch and high tech services. Media events were held at participating libraries featuring dramatists recreating the historical characters depicted in the digitization projects. Research into the lives of these historical characters "brought them to life" in authentic costumes to create photo opportunities for the media to promote the library technology projects.

These are just some of the service responses reflected in the open survey question to library administrators about new library initiatives in the past two years. Offering Internet services was named more than any other new initiative by 63.5 percent of the library administrators. Using CARLWEB, the shared database on the Internet, for interlibrary loan was named more than any other specific example by the library administrators. This service enables quicker turnaround time for interlibrary loan requests for customers. It also involves considerable commitment of staff time to make the contents of local collections available for sharing with other libraries in the system. Adding a local library's holdings to a shared database is labor intensive.

Upgrade Staff Skill Levels. Enhanced library services depend on improved skill levels and knowledge of library staff. The need to upgrade the knowledge and skills of the library staff surfaced in the top rankings for future improvements listed by library administrators (28.9 percent as a result of increased demand and 27.0 percent as a response if more staff or funds were available). Library administrators also reported a need for library staff to learn new computer applications for library use (43.4 percent). Regional library systems can effectively provide continuing education for personnel at member libraries.

Library administrators reported that the skills of library staff must be updated and there are two ways to accomplish this. One is to attract and hire more highly trained personnel at libraries. The other way is for current staff to take advanced training to increase their skills (without leaving their positions or the profession). Both of these options should be considered. The value of each may differ by size of library involved. In practice, the current salary levels offered at local libraries, especially in rural areas, make each of these options difficult.

Most library continuing education training in Illinois is delivered via video-conferencing. Each of the ALS's four offices and each of the other 11 consortia have video-conferencing capabilities. Library staff members are trained on its operation and on the presentation skills necessary to use it effectively. This training delivery method has reduced the travel time required for library staff to attend continuing education and has increased continuing education attendance. Most librarians do not have to travel more than an hour to reach a training center.

More than 100 technology-related continuing education classes are offered each year to staff at ALS member libraries. A recent series, "Technology Coordinators Qualification Course," has been especially popular among the ALS librarians. Continuing education credits are offered to librarians who complete every class in this series. The program teaches librarians how to write a technology plan for their library, as well as how to manage PCs and networks in a library environment. The classes have been featured in *Public Libraries* (Adams 1999).

As another example, ALS has designed and offered a series of workshops called "Train the Trainer" to improve the capacity of librarians to teach adults. The "Train the Trainer" series was designed to meet the need expressed by library customers for instruction on safe and appropriate use of the Internet.

More and more library continuing education training is being offered in "The Power of the Partnership: Advocating Together for Libraries," a series of eight workshops offered during a two-year period. This series builds the librarians' skills in marketing the library and in offering improved customer service. Recall that friendly and knowledgeable staff was rated as the most valuable asset of libraries, especially by customers in the highest income bracket.

Gaining Public Support

Library administrators in this sample are aware of the need to maintain public support for library services and to undertake projects that generate the required financial support to keep the library viable in the community or to increase local commitment in other ways. Several approaches for gaining public support were reported by library administrators.

Build Partnerships. Developing partnerships with local organizations on projects or activities can be a relatively low cost alternative, yet can yield major benefits to even small libraries. Library administrators were asked about ways in which they had partnered with community groups and were given a list of possible activities (**Table 24**). Since larger cities are more likely to offer opportunities to build these partnerships, the library responses were analyzed by grouping those serving a population of 5,000 or less and those serving more than 5,000. The responses were collected using a five-point Likert Scale (1 = "never"; 5 = "often").

One of the highest ranked partnership activities reported by library administrators is that they display community information in the library. This was more often reported by libraries serving a larger population (4.9) than in smaller libraries (4.2). One explanation may be that larger cities have more information available. This finding is somewhat at odds with the responses of mayors who are not always aware of this service provided by libraries.

Librarians also reported working in partnership with their regional library system, ALS, on training programs and group grants (4.7). Combined grants, which involve several separate libraries cooperating on a similar project, can be especially helpful to small libraries without the staff to write complete grant proposals on their own. Many libraries participating in the Hometown Countryside Connection (HCC) project mentioned earlier are small. The Educate and Automate grants that fund libraries adding their holdings to the RSA/CARLWEB database are written by consortia staff. The funds are used to "seed" new participating libraries, which are now typically the smaller rural libraries. Each new library added makes the database richer and the choices for interlibrary loan wider.

Librarians also reported partnerships with other libraries in the region. The most common example is repeated coordination among member libraries to bring major performers to their area for library programs. Appearances of professional storytellers, authors, or musicians are often coordinated by librarians via e-mail postings to special interest discussion lists. Through this approach, lower rates are secured from performers by clustering their performance schedule and negotiating a group discount. For instance, a group of libraries from small communities along the Rock Island Bike Trail asked the Peoria Public Library to write a group grant for funds from the Peoria Area Arts Council. The grant funded a professional storyteller, cosponsored by all the bicycle shops and related businesses in the area, to perform at various library sites along the bike trail on three consecutive spring weekends.

Another important partnership that librarians reported was working with local schools (4.6). Given the relatively large school-age clientele served by libraries in the ALS sample, working closely with the schools builds local support. Both working with other libraries and with schools ranked more important in larger libraries. It is likely that larger libraries have more specialized staff who are scheduled for sufficient hours to allow for coordination with schools and area libraries.

Table 24. How Has the Librarian or Library Staff Partnered with Other Community Groups to Provide Services?

	Library Population Served						
	Less than 5,000		5,000 or greater		All Respondents		
	Mean	Number	Mean	Number	Mean	Number	Rank
Worked with library system	4.4	56	4.7	21	4.4	79	1
Displayed community information in the library	4.2	54	4.9	21	4.4	77	1
Worked with other libraries in the region	4.0	56	4.6	20	4.1	78	2
Worked with local schools	4.0	56	4.6	21	4.1	79	2
Local newspapers have run regular features on library	3.8	55	4.4	21	4.0	78	3
Spoken to civic organizations about library	2.5	55	3.8	21	2.9	78	4
Included members of other community groups in library planning process	2.3	54	3.3	21	2.6	76	5
Worked with the chamber of commerce	2.3	45	3.0	20	2.5	67	6
Invited local officials to library demonstrations	2.3	53	3.2	19	2.5	74	6
Invited local officials to meet in library	2.5	54	2.5	20	2.5	76	6
Marketed library services to businesses	2.3	53	3.0	19	2.5	74	6
Surveyed other community groups to determine library services they desire	2.1	55	2.6	21	2.3	78	7
Worked with economic development groups	2.1	53	2.4	20	2.2	75	8
Held offices in local professional groups	1.7	52	3.2	21	2.1	75	9
Exhibited at community business expos	1.9	46	2.7	18	2.1	66	9
Entered into intergovernmental agreements with other community agencies	1.9	53	2.4	19	2.0	73	10
Hosted Head Start or preschool parent meetings	1.7	54	2.6	21	2.0	77	10
Hosted programs given by Cooperative Extension Service	1.8	55	2.3	20	1.9	77	11
Cosponsored programs with the local park district	1.6	52	2.4	18	1.8	72	12
Participated in community visioning and planning efforts (MAPPING or MainStreet strategic planning)	1.5	53	2.5	21	1.8	75	12
Hosted community college literacy classes	1.6	54	2.4	20	1.8	76	12
Hosted programs given by Illinois Arts Council	1.2	55	1.7	20	1.4	77	13
Hosted programs given by Illinois Humanities Council	1.1	55	1.6	18	1.2	75	14

Coding: 1=never; 5=often
n=79

Source: Questionnaire for Library Administrators (1999).

Library administrators also reported that local newspapers had run regular features about library activities (4.4). This publicity, of course, has virtually no cost and can build significant support both in clientele and public awareness of services provided by the library. Administrators of large libraries also spoke to civic groups about the library (3.8) and invited local officials to library demonstrations (3.2)

Use Planning for Results and Other Community Needs Assessments. Large libraries also reported including members of community groups in the library planning process (3.3). A broad-based planning activity is especially important in building local support. Mayors and local officials can be included in a library's planning process. Including these groups creates an opportunity to educate them about library programs and services, in addition to customer demands. Library administrators serious about building local support for their library should consider incorporating a planning process into ongoing business practices: "If your library really wants to have an impact it can't just be busy; it has to be busy doing the right things, and doing the right things right" (Himmel and Wilson 1998, 3). The best way to assure quality libraries well into the future is to continuously reinvent and revitalize them, based on a clear understanding of community needs and ways in which libraries can respond to those needs.

The new planning process recommended by the American Library Association is Planning for Results. It involves a process that takes approximately eight months to complete. Environmental scanning, strategic visioning exercises, and decision trees help an advisory group, comprised of library and community stakeholder groups, to determine the appropriate service responses of specific libraries. Several ALS library administrators have begun their Planning for Results process, using the results of the customer and mayor surveys.

Offer Enhanced Library Services. When library administrators listed improvements they had initiated in the past two years at their libraries, these improvements mirrored the priorities of grant funding offered by the Illinois State Library and federal agencies (**Table 25**).

The Live and Learn and Educate and Automate funds, initiated by then Secretary of State George H. Ryan, represent revenue streams created specifically to enhance coordinated development of automated, shared databases in Illinois. This service enhancement was undertaken by 20.8 percent of the libraries with populations less than 5,000 in the sample. Libraries serving populations of 5,000 and larger had completed this database development prior to 1996.

Projects that ranked first, third, fourth, and fifth in response to the question about new library initiatives within the past two years were compatible with the priorities for Live and Learn and Educate and Automate funding. They were (1) Provide Internet Access (63.5 percent), (3) Offer Added Computer Related Applications (25.7 percent), (4) Library Construction Projects (17.6 percent), and (5) Interlibrary Loan Improvements via RSA/CARLWEB (14.9 percent). With the pattern of new initiatives reported by ALS libraries mirroring so closely the criteria for state grant funding, it is clear that new initiatives depend on state funding rather than local funds.

Sixty-four percent of library administrators in this sample reported that adding Internet access was the most important service enhancement their library has offered in the past two years. This certainly coincides with stated customer demands.

Enhance Library Programming. Adding enhanced library programming was ranked first by library administrators in response to a question about additional services they would offer if funds permitted. Programming also ranked second among the new services that have been successfully undertaken at libraries within the past two years. These responses reflect the "balance" referenced in the Benton Foundation study since programming is usually a highly interactive, human presentation. Examples of the new programming, based on the open survey questions, ranged from instructional classes to one-on-one training appointments to storytellers and other adult programming.

Table 25. What Are the Two Most Important Activities You Have Undertaken in the Past Two Years to Improve Library Services and Gain Support from People in the Service Area?

	Library Population Served						
	Less than 5,000		5,000 or Greater		All Respondents		
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Rank
Internet	67.9	36	52.6	10	63.5	47	1
Programming (children, adult, summer, etc.)	39.6	21	31.6	6	37.8	28	2
Computer related	30.2	16	15.8	3	25.7	19	3
Construction/renovation/remodel	17.0	9	21.1	4	17.6	13	4
Interlibrary loan (RSA)	20.8	11	0.0	0	14.9	11	5
Public relations	13.2	7	15.8	3	13.5	10	6
Increase collection	9.4	5	10.5	2	9.5	7	7
Grant/grant writing	1.9	1	21.1	4	6.8	5	8
Automation of circulation/catalog	3.8	2	5.3	1	5.4	4	9
Extend hours	5.7	3	5.3	1	5.4	4	10
Staff training	1.9	1	5.3	1	4.1	3	11
Electronic references	3.8	2	5.3	1	4.1	3	12
Expanding services	1.9	1	5.3	1	2.7	2	13
Tax related	0.0	0	10.5	2	2.7	2	14
Add staff	0.0	0	5.3	1	1.4	1	15

n=79

Source: Questionnaire for Library Administrators (1999).

Responses by library administrators to the open survey question suggest that a wide array of programs have been initiated and have helped to gain support from residents in the library service area. Enhancing and expanding the children's story hours and summer reading programs were cited most often. Librarians are well aware that the Benton Foundation study found that the highest rated library service (85 percent) was service to children. Librarians also know that the American public believes strongly in the educational roles of libraries (Estrabrook and Horak 1992). Recall that ALS customers ranked improvement in family members' school performance as the second most valuable service received from their library (32.9 percent).

Many other types of programming were mentioned by library administrators when asked about services that helped to gain public support. Some libraries formed an intergenerational community network to provide programming, and others hosted open houses during community events. Offering adult literacy classes in the library and inviting school classes to visit the public library were also named.

Examples of adult programming offered at responding libraries include adult reading clubs with incentives for participation such as gift certificates to local restaurants. "Ideas for Adult Programming" was one of the best-attended workshops offered by the ALS during 1999. Librarians and their staff do not typically provide the program content for adult programming. It is usually a matter of securing agencies and individuals willing to offer adult programs and scheduling them into library facilities. Many adult program offerings involve partnerships.

Offer Added Computer-Related Applications. The third ranked service enhancement reported by the ALS libraries is additional computer-related applications. To help add computer-related applications to ALS libraries, federal e-rate funds have been aggressively pursued. It has taken great tenacity on the part of library directors to stay with the e-rate process. At times, the future of the e-rate funding has been threatened. Workshops were offered by the ALS in August 1996 to help libraries develop long-range technology plans. The ALS and member libraries garnered more than $3.2 million of e-rate funding in the first year of the program.

The additional dollars were passed along to telecommunications providers who installed the new lines and networks for the libraries. This infusion of funds permitted and encouraged libraries to purchase additional computer-related enhancements sooner than they might otherwise have done without the incentive of e-rate funds. The flurry of training for, and writing of, the five-year technology plans by the ALS and its members hastened the pace of computer innovations in this regional library system.

While libraries will not actually see new dollars from the e-rate program, the reimbursement program for telecommunications providers may allow for reallocation of funds in libraries' strained budgets. Every librarian from a library serving a population under 50,000 who responded to a 1997 *Library Journal* survey said they had cut their materials budgets to fund some type of net-based service (St. Lifer 1997).

E-rate reimbursements are intended to reduce the impact of telecommunications costs as a barrier to service enhancements. Poverty factors in a given area are used in the formula to determine e-rate reimbursements. Since much of the poverty in Illinois is in rural areas, rural libraries stand to gain the most from the e-rate program. Such libraries are eligible for 20 to 90 percent discounts on telecommunications costs.

In the first year of the e-rate program, the U.S. invested $1.7 billion to bring Internet access to more than 8,000 schools and libraries across the country. According to a recent study by Forrester Research, the e-rate has had a significant impact on bridging the "digital divide," which is the chasm between the haves and the have-nots with respect to information access (Goslee 1998; Kennard 1999). Advanced telecommunications are central to economic development (Brasher 1999). Often in rural areas, the schools and libraries are the first to request upgrades in telecommunications infrastructure in a community. This is apparent as the Illinois Century Network infrastructure is laid in Illinois. Once telephone companies install upgraded lines, all rural community members can benefit.

Construction, Renovation, or Remodeling of Library Facilities. The fourth most important ranked initiative was construction, renovation, or remodeling of library buildings. Most often, facilities were upgraded to accommodate computer networks and to add public meeting rooms that could also be used to host increased library programming.

Write Grants. Grant writing ranked fifth in importance as a new service offered in the past two years among libraries serving populations larger than 5,000. It ranked nearly last for libraries serving populations smaller than 5,000. This is a substantial difference. Again, it suggests that smaller libraries do not have sufficient staff for grant writing, or perhaps the boards of smaller libraries do not have funds to hire librarians for the hours required to complete grant applications; however, as noted earlier, adding library staff ranked absolutely last among activities that had actually been undertaken in the past two years to improve library services.

Consider Staffing Enhancements. The response ranked last for service enhancements offered within the past two years was additional staff. As the libraries have tried to meet the demand for both new and traditional services, they have added few, if any, staff. New library funding streams in Illinois have been distributed as annual competitive and per capita grants, rather than as long-term funding. Under this scenario, library administrators are not likely to commit to the long-term expense of additional staff. The energies of current staff have simply been redirected as new services are demanded. This may mean that services librarians value and have begun to work on in the past, such as economic development, must receive lower priority until more dependable funding streams are secured or until current staff are not so preoccupied with learning new computer applications. The one and only library that mentioned adding staff said, "Now that my staff is not so overworked, they are much more friendly and customers appreciate this."

Taking Public Library Service into the Future: Transition Expectations, Opportunities, and Obstacles

Overall, library administrators responding to this survey are optimistic about the future, perhaps for several reasons. Book sales in the U.S. are rising. Circulation at Illinois libraries is increasing per capita, and interlibrary loan figures continue to soar. There is a certain irony in the fact that the most widely sold item in e-commerce is books (Benton Foundation 1999).

The Vision of Library Administrators for the Next Decade

Library administrators were asked to predict what library services would be like in the next decade based on a list of specific possibilities. The vision (**Table 26**) includes these top five responses based on a Likert Scale (1 = "least likely"; 5 = "most likely"). Library administrators reported higher expectations for changes when compared with the library customers responding to this study.

More Library Usage. The expectation that the library will experience more usage by the public was reported as an expected trend (4.7) by responding administrators. This is probably realistic if the patterns and trends prevalent during the past five years continue. National library circulation has increased steadily during the past five years to 1.6 billion transactions, according to *The Bowker Annual* (1998). Nationwide, borrowing library-to-library, as reported by *The Bowker Annual*, has also increased.

As more libraries make their holdings available on the Internet, there is increased opportunity for the public to locate information from the convenience of their home or office, as well as for other libraries to place interlibrary loan requests. Libraries with records on the Internet must be prepared to handle the potential interlibrary loan demand.

Offering more programming, for which many library administrators reported, is likely to increase library attendance. In Illinois, attendance averages more than five visits per capita. Nationally, attendance at children's programs was over 38 million (*The Bowker Annual* 1998). Libraries planning

Table 26. What Is Your Vision for the Library in the Next Ten Years?

	Library Population Served						
	Less than 5,000		5,000 or greater		All Respondents		
	Mean	Number	Mean	Number	Mean	Number	Rank
More usage by general public	4.6	56	4.8	20	4.7	78	1
Increase in donations and bequests to library	4.4	55	4.5	20	4.4	77	2
More involvement by public	4.2	55	4.5	20	4.3	76	3
Greater public financial support of library	4.1	55	4.5	20	4.2	77	4
Statewide interlibrary loan access	4.2	55	3.9	20	4.1	77	5
More partnerships with library systems	3.9	54	4.1	19	4.0	75	6
More involvement by trustees	3.9	55	4.1	20	3.9	77	7
Free use by all residents of the state	3.6	54	3.9	19	3.7	75	8
More instruction offered by library staff to patrons	3.3	56	3.8	20	3.5	78	9
New and larger building	3.2	53	3.9	19	3.5	74	9
More business use of library	3.3	53	3.7	20	3.4	75	10
More active library role in community events	3.2	55	3.9	19	3.4	76	10
More partnerships on programs with local groups	3.1	54	3.6	19	3.2	75	11
More partnerships with state agencies (i.e., Illinois Arts Council, Illinois Humanities Council)	2.6	52	3.2	19	2.8	73	12
More partnerships with museums	2.3	52	2.5	17	2.4	71	13
More partnerships with public television stations	2.2	51	2.4	16	2.3	69	14
Not much change; library will be very much as it is now	2.0	51	1.3	19	1.8	71	15

Coding: 1=least prefer; 5=most prefer.
n=79

Source: Questionnaire for Library Administrators (1999).

more partnerships with public schools can market library offerings to schoolchildren and their families. Public libraries are likely to increase library attendance figures. Public libraries have service hours extending longer than the hours of computer labs in public schools to accommodate students' needs.

The college-age portion of the population is predicted to increase 25 percent in the next 15 years (Bernstein 1999). Public libraries whose services support the formal education system may see increased demand. Commuting students, often teachers and adults, are major users of interlibrary loans. As the teacher recertification program in Illinois swells the number of educators taking evening and summer classes, they may depend upon the extended service hours of the public library for materials or on-line support.

Growth of the Internet continues, and the ability of librarians to keep pace with understanding and navigating it could also increase library usage. Metadata capabilities allow librarians to catalog websites for more efficient information retrieval. The question, of course, remains whether there will be enough personnel in libraries to keep pace with these demands.

Increase in Library Bequests and Donations. According to library administrators responding to the survey, there will be an increase in bequests and donations to the library (4.4). The past two years have brought a pattern of increased bequests and donations to libraries within the ALS. Two donations of more than half a million dollars have been made.

The Andrew Carnegie of this Century—Bill Gates—has earmarked Illinois as a recipient in the next round of Gates Grants. Donations of computers, software, and training will be made to libraries in poverty areas, many of which are rural. Librarians in the ALS sample were aware that the initial paperwork had been completed by Illinois for the Gates Grants, at the time of this study.

Involvement by Public and Tax Support. More involvement by the public and greater public financial support for the library (4.3/4.2) were predicted by the library administrators responding to the survey. Nationally, voters approved additional funding for libraries 70 percent of the time in 1997 and 80 percent in 1996 (*The Bowker Annual* 1998). A 1997 *Library Journal* survey of 352 libraries nationwide reported that voters supported library bond issues 80 percent of the time (St. Lifer 1997).

Library administrators predicted greater public financial support (4.2) without having seen the results of the surveys from the library users or the Illinois Rural Life Panel. Library users in the current study indicated they were willing to pay an additional $1.01 to $2.00 per month (42.7 percent) or less than a dollar per month (17.7 percent). Even 39.6 percent said they would be willing to pay up to $3.00 more per month for additional library services.

Illinois Rural Life Panel respondents agreed that they would pay higher property taxes to improve the library. There was only a 2 percentage point difference between rural residents who were currently living within a library district (42 percent) and those who were living outside a library district (44 percent) on this issue.

Increase in Interlibrary Loan Activity. Library administrators responding to the survey reported that they expect an increase in statewide interlibrary loan access (4.1). At the time of the ALS survey, most library administrators had heard the discussions in Illinois about the Web Z Project which would make the LLSAPs of all 12 regional library systems searchable under one interface. Library staff was using a prototype of the VIC when the survey was conducted. Since the time of the survey, the VIC has been released for public use. Now all Illinois residents with Internet access can view the holdings of all types of libraries that are members of Illinois regional library systems. As customers are able to access the holdings of Illinois libraries on their home and work computers, will demand for interlibrary loan increase? The library administrators in this sample predict that the answer is yes.

The VIC will keep Illinois residents competitive in the information economy. The American economy historically derived its *competitive* advantage because of its capacity to develop and commercialize new technologies faster than its competitors (Kraushaar and Beverley 1990). Illinois truly understands and follows this *competitive* advantage model when it comes to investments in libraries and library development.

More Partnerships. Library administrators predict that during the next decade there will be more partnerships within and with the library system (4.0). Meaningful access requires cooperation among all types of libraries. No library, no matter how large, can by itself provide access (Schuman 1990). This perception was strongly held by the library administrators surveyed. Illinois has been a model of multitype library cooperation since 1968.

The regional library systems in Illinois were first funded in 1968 and have been building library cooperation ever since. The cooperation continues to strengthen as the shared databases of the Illinois regional library systems add holdings. All networks and library computer systems have one purpose: to get the right information to the right person at the right time (Kraushaar and Beverley 1990).

Library Trustee Involvement. Library administrators at libraries of all sizes rated more involvement by library trustees as 3.9 or higher in importance. Trustees play very important roles in promoting and supporting local library service. ALS administrators may have been optimistic about trustee involvement because more trustee workshops have been provided in recent years by the Illinois State Library and regional library systems. Since most library improvements are contingent upon the policies and budgeting of local boards, more trustee involvement could be beneficial during these times of rapid changes in libraries.

Optimism Greater for Library Administrators of Larger Libraries. Administrators from libraries serving populations larger than 5,000 rated six more opportunities as likely during the coming decade than administrators of smaller libraries did (3.6 versus 3.9). The administrators of larger libraries believe that all Illinois residents will be eligible to use public libraries within ten years. Administrators of smaller libraries surrounded by untaxed/unserved rural areas were not so optimistic.

Administrators of larger libraries had greater expectations of offering instruction to customers (3.3 versus 3.8). It is more likely that the size of their facility and staff will accommodate instruction.

There is also a greater expectation by administrators of larger libraries that they will be in a new or larger building within ten years (3.2 versus 3.9). Since construction grants in Illinois require matching funds from the local library, it appears from the data that the administrators of larger libraries are more confident that they will have the matching dollars.

More business use of the library (3.3 versus 3.7), a more active library role in the community (3.2 versus 3.9), and more partnerships on library programming (3.1 versus 3.6) are all envisioned by administrators of larger libraries but are not deemed as likely by administrators of libraries serving populations of less than 5,000.

Overall, the vision was more positive for librarians serving communities with populations larger than 5,000. The list of items ranked as 3.9 or higher was almost double the list provided by respondents in smaller libraries.

Obstacles to Achieving the Vision

The 79 library administrators queried were asked to name the main obstacles perceived as impediments to achieving their vision for their libraries. Several potential threats to the libraries were listed and library administrators were asked to rate them with 5 being a major obstacle and 1 being a minor obstacle. Only two obstacles received higher than a 3.9 rating on the five-point Likert scale (**Table 27**).

Table 27. What Are the Main Obstacles to Achieving Your Vision?

	Mean	Number	Rank
Too much competition for public's time	4.0	75	1
General lack of tax dollars	3.9	76	2
Businesses don't have need for library services	3.3	69	3
Library building is inadequate and too small	3.3	76	4
Little recognition of library potential	2.9	74	5
Inability of libraries to articulate the value of their services to the public	2.9	71	6

Coding: 1=minor obstacle; 5=major obstacle
n=79

Source: Questionnaire for Library Administrators (1999).

Competition with Other Activities. Library directors are well aware that many activities and forms of entertainment compete for the time of the general public (4.0). This awareness of competition as a major obstacle may be an incentive for library administrators to compete for customers' attention more aggressively by advertising and publicizing library offerings. Library administrators did not believe that the quality of the programming or the collections or the reference service offered are lacking; rather, they are acutely aware of the many other demands on customers' time. The library administrators' perception about quality of services is consistent with the responses of library customers who did not complain about the quality or variety of library services.

Lack of Tax Dollars. Libraries rely heavily on local property taxes for funding and library administrators must compete with other taxing entities for a finite amount of tax revenue. They reported the lack of public funds as an important issue (3.9). Approximately 85 percent of a typical public library's funding comes from local property taxes and only 7 percent from state sources (Illinois State Library 1998). State revenue is distributed to public libraries by means of an Annual Per Capita Grant of $1.25 per capita, one-time competitive grant awards, and discretionary grants provided by legislators.

Other obstacles to progress toward their visions, as reported by library administrators, were rated a 3.3 or lower. These include businesses don't have need for library services (3.3), library building is inadequate or too small (3.3), little recognition of library potential (2.9), and inability of libraries to articulate the value of services to the public (2.9).

All of the perceived obstacles can be affected by librarians, but some will take more work than others. Showing businesses that libraries offer useful and valuable services will take effort by librarians. Since up-to-date business resources can be cost prohibitive for small libraries, this may be evidence that the Illinois State Library and regional library systems, like ALS, need to continue efforts to provide full-text electronic resources and indexes through negotiated group purchase agreements.

Inadequacy of the library facilities, of course, means a capital campaign; this is usually a major initiative requiring the library board to aggressively market the need and obtain financing. The last two items mentioned, however, are certainly within the control of librarians using approaches that may not take major financial investments. Librarians have the potential to best articulate the possibilities and value of libraries to the community. This is an issue mainly of communication. Increasing and improving the quality of communication by librarians to the public is the best way to address these last two obstacles.

Predictions for Changes in the Next Decade

Library administrators of the larger libraries in the sample (**Table 28**) predicted more changes at the 3.8 level or higher (5.0 means very important). They expect that Internet services will expand (4.7), more computers will be added (4.8), electronic subscriptions will increase substantially (4.4), the skill level of library staff will increase (4.2), customer service and customized services will improve (4.1), more classes will be offered in libraries (3.9), more programs for adults will be offered (3.9), print holdings will increase substantially (3.8), more programs for youth will be offered (3.8), and the library will partner with more groups (3.8).

The areas of expected change identified by administrators of larger libraries closely follow the pattern of customer demands shown earlier in this study. The demands seem to fall into the high touch group of services such as adult programming, youth programming, classes offered in the library, improved customer service, and enhanced skill level of library staff. The anticipated changes also include a group of high tech services such as increased electronic subscriptions, expanded Internet service, and more computers available in the library. An expectation of increased partnerships shows the library administrators' willingness to coordinate and cooperate with regional and community agencies. Library administrators working at larger libraries also predicted an increase in print collections, which is totally in sync with the requests of both library customers and rural residents.

Table 28. How Will Your Library Actually Change in Ten Years?

	Library Population Served						
	Less than 5,000		5,000 or Greater		All Respondents		
	Mean	Number	Mean	Number	Mean	Number	Rank
Internet services will expand in library	4.0	56	4.7	20	4.2	78	1
Will provide fewer services	1.2	52	1.1	19	1.2	72	1
More computers will be added	3.9	55	4.8	20	4.1	77	2
Improved customer service and customized services	3.9	55	4.1	20	3.9	77	3
Skill level of library staff will increase	3.8	56	4.2	19	3.9	77	4
Print holdings will increase substantially	3.3	54	3.8	20	3.4	76	5
More programs for adults in the library	3.2	55	3.9	20	3.4	77	6
More youth programs	3.2	56	3.8	19	3.4	77	7
More services for very young students	3.3	54	3.5	20	3.4	76	8
Library will partner more with other groups	2.8	54	3.8	19	3.1	75	9
Staff will engage in more outreach services	3.0	54	3.4	20	3.1	76	10
Electronic subscriptions will increase substantially	2.7	52	4.4	17	3.1	71	11
More classes offered in the library	2.8	55	3.9	19	3.1	76	12

Coding: 1=least likely; 5=most likely.
n=79

Source: Questionnaire for Library Administrators (1999).

Identifying ten distinct areas that will change substantially within the next decade at these larger libraries sets an ambitious agenda for library administrators. In the past, these administrators have been early adopters and innovators, so it is likely that they will address the trends and services that customers identified as important. Most likely, each library administrator will approach the issues in different ways because of different decisionmaking environments and community needs for change.

Such an ambitious agenda will require community support and sound fiscal planning. Library administrators at the larger libraries were the first to embrace the ALA Planning for Results process and some have already completed this inclusive activity. They have identified community leaders who can help make their visions a reality. They have started building a constituency of stakeholders who understand library services and customer needs in their communities.

Administrators of libraries serving fewer than 5,000 people rated only four services at 3.8 or higher. These library administrators expect that Internet services will expand in the library, more computers will be added, the skill level of library staff will increase, and improved customer service and customized services will be offered. The fact that these library administrators expect major changes in four areas, rather than ten, may reflect a smaller assortment of services provided or that they are not as confident in their ability to obtain the resources needed for major adjustments in the library service delivery.

The four areas named by library administrators in smaller libraries were not rated as high as in the larger libraries. In each case, the Likert ratings were 4.0 or lower, while administrators of larger libraries rated some of their items with more optimistic scores of 4.7 (Internet services will expand), 4.8 (more computers will be added), and 4.4 (more classes will be offered in the library).

Public Demand Outpacing Funding and Staff

Earlier sections of this report pointed out that local library budgets are often inadequate to incorporate the newest technology and enhancements in services without supplemental funding from state grants to meet the needs of the public. When library administrators were asked to identify the library services for which public demand was outpacing the library's funding or staffing capacity, two responses rated far above all others: (1) assisting customers to use the Internet (71.9 percent) and (2) helping customers learn to use computers (67.2 percent) (**Table 29**). These two priorities are more pronounced in the larger libraries than in their smaller counterparts. Larger libraries reported that assisting customers to use the Internet (88.2 percent) and helping customers learn to use computers (82.4 percent) were areas that need additional funds to keep pace with demands.

While in the past the Office of the Secretary of State/State Librarian provided funds to purchase computers, it is common knowledge that technology becomes dated quickly. Many small libraries are reporting that their current computers do not have enough capacity to accommodate the CD-Rom version of the shared database for interlibrary loan along with other computer applications. The perception by library administrators regarding the demand outpacing capacity is consistent with the high demand that customers reported for computer and Internet-related services.

Having the library staff learn and teach new computer applications for library use is a concern to nearly one-third (32.8 percent) of responding library administrators. Staff must have time away from their jobs to attend training sessions, plus time to practice and perfect the skills learned. Releasing staff to attend training programs can be difficult while still trying to maintain the existing services that the public seeks.

Both libraries serving populations larger than 5,000 and those serving populations under 5,000 agreed on the fourth and fifth ranked items: presenting children's programming and scheduling sufficient programming in general. These activities require staff preparation time, scheduling time, materials, and adequate budgets to keep the programming current. Cost increases for library materials have been significant and, in some instances, have outpaced the fiscal resources available, especially in small rural libraries.

Table 29. For Which of the Library Services Is the Local Public Demand Outpacing the Library's Funding and Staffing Capacity?

	Library Population Served						
	Less than 5,000		5,000 or Greater		All Respondents		
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Mean	Number	Rank
Helping patrons use the Internet	65.2	30	88.2	15	71.9	46	1
Helping patrons learn to use the computer	63.0	29	82.4	14	67.2	43	2
Learning new computer applications for library use	32.6	15	35.3	6	32.8	21	3
Presenting children's programs	23.9	11	35.3	6	26.6	17	4
Scheduling programming to be offered in library	21.7	10	11.8	2	18.8	12	5
Teaching patrons to use library services	15.2	7	23.5	4	17.2	11	6
Writing grants to supplement library budget	4.3	2	23.5	4	10.9	7	15

n=79

Source: Questionnaire for Library Administrators (1999).

Two library services for which demand has outpaced resources were mentioned by nearly a quarter of the respondents from larger libraries, but were not mentioned as frequently by administrators of smaller libraries. The two services highly demanded in larger libraries are (1) teaching customers to use library services (23.5 percent) and (2) writing grants to supplement the library budget (23.5 percent). The larger libraries within ALS offer innovative services sooner and the clientele served seems to desire more assistance in learning to use the services.

With the wealth of grants being offered during these prosperous economic times, library administrators from larger libraries may feel a greater demand to complete grant applications than staffing patterns allow. They may sense expectations by board members and the public for them to seek more funding. They actually may know about more grant funding opportunities than they can take advantage of during the economic expansion. Once again, it may be a question of having sufficient staff time to prepare the applications and then implement the services.

Small libraries, however, may be less knowledgeable about accessing state and federal grants. They, in turn, may have to turn to grant writing specialists provided by regional library systems or other public agencies in the region. Accessing this help, of course, places additional demands on library administrators in the small libraries who already are trying to accommodate increased computer usage and training demands, as well as requests for Internet assistance while maintaining traditional library services at levels satisfactory to their customers.

Designing Library Destiny: Declining, Digital, or Demand-Driven

At the start of a new century, Illinois libraries face challenges and opportunities that will leave no library untouched. Libraries are about to become either much more than they are now – or much less. Based on analyses of customer preferences and emerging technology trends, librarians must be proactive in determining the destiny of their libraries.

The Internet has changed the way people look for and find information. With digital access, the barriers of time and place have become much less significant. Rural libraries can take advantage of this phenomenon to satisfy customers wanting libraries that are accessible more hours. Library resources can be made available to customers from the convenience of their homes via the Internet. The barriers of time and place are most acutely felt in rural areas. Elimination of these barriers can be an asset to rural development.

Libraries must define which services are best delivered by digital methods and which will still be demanded on-site within a "bricks and mortar" structure with human interaction. Library customers in this study clearly stated a demand for public libraries to provide Internet access and instruction on its appropriate use. They also clearly requested high touch services such as more programming for children and adults. Illinois librarians are challenged to strike a balance of high tech/high touch services for a wide age range of customers.

Illinois Innovations in their Infancy

As of 2000, several statewide initiatives are on the horizon in Illinois that can bring new vitality to libraries if library administrators and staff are prepared to make the necessary innovations.

E-books. Libraries in this sample have only begun to offer e-books in their collections and the ALS has negotiated a consortium agreement. The question is not whether libraries should contain printed or digital books. The question is really when and how many of each will customers demand and will budgets accommodate. Remember, the most demanded improvement of library services by customers was expanded collections.

The Virtual Illinois Catalog (VIC). The libraries in the Illinois sample have just become part of a digital library infrastructure that is much larger than any single institution and more important than any single regional library system. The VIC was launched in late 1999. It has the potential to revolutionize interlibrary loan because customers can view Illinois library holdings on their home and work computers. Interlibrary loan was identified by customers as the most important single service provided by libraries, even before VIC was launched. It remains to be seen how much increased interlibrary loan activity will be created now that Illinois residents may search library holdings from home or work.

On-line Reference Resources. Libraries in Illinois have begun to receive and use training to become familiar with the on-line reference databases and indexes licensed for statewide library use by the Illinois State Library and delivered to even the smallest, rural library via the Internet. As long as libraries adhere to minimum standards to maintain membership in a library system, they are eligible to receive these on-line reference resources. FirstSearch and NoveList have been available at public libraries for more than a year, but public awareness and use of the services are still not where they should be. These on-line products can provide full-text journal articles and readers' advisory information for fiction selection.

Illinois Century Network. The infrastructure for the Illinois Century Network, which will support electronic delivery of digital products to Illinois schools, libraries, universities, and colleges at acceptable speeds, is being laid. Funds are currently in place to begin connecting public libraries to this network.

E-Rate Discounts on Telecommunications Costs. The federal e-rate program is in its infancy, with first year funding recently distributed and third year applications currently in process. This program, which provides from 20 to 90 percent reimbursements for telecommunications costs to schools and libraries, has already driven technology upgrades and technology planning in local libraries. Some of the libraries in areas with the highest poverty have received funding for internal wiring and networks as well. Since the program has been in place, more and more rural public libraries have requested assistance from their regional library system to apply for e-rate funds.

Gates Foundation Grants. The Gates Foundation will soon deliver software, hardware, and training to library staffs in impoverished areas of Illinois. The targeted libraries must serve areas with greater than 10 percent of their population below the poverty level. Other states that have recently completed Gates Foundation projects report that local officials have developed a new recognition of the capabilities of the public library during the Gates Foundation projects and have partnered with libraries in new ways. Illinois library administrators must be especially aware of this opportunity to improve relations with local government officials in light of the findings of the LRC study mentioned earlier in this report.

Designing a Destiny for Illinois Libraries

Illinois librarians must be adaptable and willing to take advantage of these rapid changes in order to guide their libraries toward growth and vitality. Librarians currently have the professional opportunity and the imperative to become much more than they are now. If librarians are willing to make Illinois libraries demand-driven institutions, they will listen to the customers who responded to the surveys in this study, as well as learn to survey their own local customers regularly.

The customer demands expressed were for a great diversity of services, both high tech and high touch. The age range and income range of the diverse population that public libraries serve is broader than many other public institutions such as public schools or community colleges. Parents value the support that libraries provide for family members' performance in school. Retired citizens value the assistance provided by friendly and knowledgeable library staff when senior citizens need recreation, genealogy, or hobby-related materials. Consumers value aid in researching the price and quality of items before purchase. Customers value the fact that libraries promote the importance of reading and reading skills, since both information delivered in print or digitally must still be read to be comprehended.

These customers and their satisfaction with library services will determine the vitality of libraries in the new century. Satisfied customers are the best advertisement any business, public or private, can have. In the past, public agencies have sometimes forgotten the need to explicitly consider what their customers are demanding.

The customers in this sample have requested more library programming as much as they have demanded digital access. Librarians must determine how to balance these demands for high tech services with the demands for high touch services. Children's programming, cultural programming, and adult programming have all seen increased demand. The value of the social encounter with a friendly library staffperson cannot be discounted from the strong customer responses. Finding and hiring the type of staff that is both personable and technically adept, as well as adaptable to rapid change, is a challenge within library budgets.

To make Illinois libraries demand-driven institutions, we must listen to customers and design an appropriate mix of library services to address the needs of customers of all ages from a variety of economic and educational levels as lifelong learners. In the future, that will not only be recommended, it will be essential for libraries to prosper.

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Appendix A

Appendix A. By User Type, Rate the Importance of Local Library Services in Helping You to . . .

	Mean	Number	Rank
Internet and Technology Services			
Gain access to Internet	3.45	2,505	23
Learn how to use the Internet	3.29	2,450	31
Helping you use the Internet	3.43	2,440	25
Helping you learn to use the computer	3.33	2,435	30
Digitizing unique local historical materials before they deteriorate	3.89	2,423	10
Library working with community groups to provide a community Internet site	3.72	2,411	17
Hobby and Leisure			
Providing advice to fiction readers about next "best book" to read	3.86	2,509	11
Children and Youth Services			
Improve family members' grades in school	3.54	2,451	20
Helping children find storybooks	3.91	2,494	9
Presenting children's programs and story hours	3.79	2,464	14
Helping students find materials for class	4.03	2,445	7
Library providing materials to teachers and students	4.34	2,457	2
Basic Reference Materials			
Locate local services through reference materials	3.26	2,469	34
Helping you find reference materials	4.19	2,581	5
Looking up answers for you	3.78	2,539	15
Answering reference questions by phone	3.44	2,477	24
Helping senior citizens find reading materials	3.94	2,512	8
Adult Programming			
Presenting adult programming	3.39	2,438	26
Teaching you to use library services	3.56	2,473	19
Library making presentations to public groups	3.58	2,376	18
Economic Development and Business Services			
Start your own business	2.71	2,438	42
Promote your existing business	2.69	2,425	43
Make better investment decisions	3.12	2,467	37
Locate vendors for business products	2.87	2,407	41
Research prices or quality of items before purchasing	3.37	2,448	28
Arranging meetings in library for civic groups	3.08	2,417	39
Staff working with civic groups	3.28	2,423	32
Library working with economic development groups	3.39	2,394	27
Providing local history materials for historic preservation or tourism projects	3.78	2,475	16
Providing business reference services	3.50	2,387	21
Employment and Workforce Development			
Become more productive on your job	3.16	2,486	35
Learn about new jobs or other business opportunities	2.95	2,487	40
Obtain a different job	2.66	2,462	44
Learn new job skills or enhance job skills	3.10	2,444	38
Save personal or business time and effort	3.27	2,448	33
Locate information about colleges or other educational opportunities	3.34	2,447	29
Read out-of-town newspaper and or magazines	3.46	2,511	22
Do research for classes you are taking to enhance job skills	3.16	2,435	36
Promoting the importance of reading and reading skills	4.29	2,493	4
Providing literacy training programs	3.79	2,404	13
Interlibrary Loan			
Obtain materials through interlibrary loan from other libraries	4.03	2,552	6
Obtaining books through interlibrary loan for you	4.31	2,527	3
Public Relations and Customer Service			
Publicizing library services and programs	3.84	2,460	12
Library staff being knowledgeable and providing friendly service	4.70	2,568	1

Coding: 1=not important; 5=very important
n=2,776

Source: Questionnaire for Library Users (1999).

Appendix B

Questionnaire for Library Users

The Institute for Rural Affairs, at Western Illinois University, and the **Alliance Library System**, a consortia of 300 libraries in Central Illinois, are conducting a research project to determine the economic impact/benefit of public libraries. **Your opinions are important to this project.**

I. User Library Services

A. Rate the importance of local library services in helping you to . . .

Library Services	*Importance Level*					*Don't Know*
	Not		*Moderate*		*Very*	
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	
1 Become more productive on your job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Learn about new jobs or other business opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Obtain a different job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Start your own business	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Promote your existing business	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Make better investment decisions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Learn new job skills or enhance job skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Save personal or business time and effort	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Locate information about colleges or other educational opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Locate local services through reference materials	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Locate vendors for business products	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Research prices or quality of items before purchasing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Obtain materials through Interlibrary loan from other libraries	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Gain access to Internet	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. Learn how to use the Internet	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. Improve family members' grades in school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. Read out-of -town newspapers and/or magazines	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. Do research for classes you're taking to enhance job skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

B. Rank the 5 most valuable services that you receive from this library. Use the letters from the previous question (I A) to show your answers (1st being the highest):

________	________	________	________	________
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th

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II. Library Services Provided

A. Rank each library service by its value to you

	Importance Level					
Library Services	*Not*		*Moderate*		*Very*	*Don't Know*
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	
1. Helping you find reference materials	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Helping children find story books	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Looking up answers for you	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Answering reference questions by phone	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Arranging meetings in library for civic groups	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Presenting children's programs and story hours	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Presenting adult programming	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Helping you use the Internet	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Teaching you to use library services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Staff working with civic groups	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Helping you learn to use the computer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Helping students find materials for class	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Helping senior citizens find reading materials	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Library working with economic development groups	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. Promoting the importance of reading and reading skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. Providing literacy training programs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. Library making presentations to public groups	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. Obtaining books through Interlibrary loan for you	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. Providing readers advice to fiction readers about the next "best book" to read	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. Providing local history materials for historic preservation or tourism projects	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. Publicizing library services and programs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. Providing business reference services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. Library staff being knowledgeable and providing friendly service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. Digitizing unique local historical materials before they deteriorate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. Library working with community groups to provide a community Internet site	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. Library providing materials to teachers and students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

B. Rank the 5 most valuable services that you receive from this library. Use the letters from the previous question (II A) to show your answers (1st being the highest):

________	________	________	________	________
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th

C. What other services would you like to see offered at this library?

____

____

____

D. What current library services would you like to see improved?

____

____

____

E. Do you think having a local public library . . .

	Yes	*No*	*Don't Know*
a) adds to quality of life in the community?	☐	☐	☐
b) helps attract businesses to the community?	☐	☐	☐
c) helps attract or retain residents in the community?	☐	☐	☐
d) improves student school performance?	☐	☐	☐

F. Would you be willing to pay to have additional library services provided? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how much additional per month would you be willing to pay for these services?

- ☐ less than $1.00
- ☐ $1.01 to $2.00
- ☐ $2.01 to $3.00

G. Did you combine your trip to the library today with any other activities that benefitted the local economy, such as:

- ☐ Shopping at local businesses
- ☐ Volunteering at a local church or community organization
- ☐ Attending the YMCA or a sporting event
- ☐ Other, specify ____________________________

H. If you were to place a dollar estimate on the value of the library services you and your family have received from the library during the past 12 months, what would it be?

$____

(Did you change jobs after using resume books or newspapers at the library? Did you learn Internet skills at the library? What would it cost to subscribe to the magazines you borrowed? What would child care have cost for the hours your children spent at library story hours? What would it cost you to buy the books you borrowed? What would it cost you to locate and pick up the books you received on Interlibrary Loan?)

I. Do you think the library should have a trained professional to help you navigate the Internet or find appropriate/ authoritative sites on the Internet? ☐ Yes ☐ No

J. Do you think it is important that Internet access is provided at this library? ☐ Yes ☐ No

K. Do you think it is important that instruction on safe and appropriate Internet use is provided at this library?
☐ Yes ☐ No

III. Personal Characteristics

A. Your age: ☐ 17 to 20 ☐ 21 to 30 ☐ 31 to 50 ☐ 51 to 65 ☐ 65 or older

B. Are you: ☐ male ☐ female

C. Main occupational status: ☐ student ☐ employed full-time ☐ employed part-time
☐ unemployed ☐ retired

D. Family status: ☐ single ☐ married ☐ divorced ☐ other

E. Approximate annual income: ☐ less than $15,000 ☐ $15,000 to $25,000
☐ $25,000 to $50,000 ☐ over $50,000

F. How did you get to the library today? ☐ Walked ☐ Drove own vehicle
☐ Family member brought me ☐ Got a ride with a friend or neighbor
☐ Used public transportation ☐ Rode a bicycle

G. In the past year, how often have you come to this library? ☐ daily ☐ weekly ☐ biweekly
☐ monthly ☐ occasionally

H. When do you typically use the library? ☐ weekday morning ☐ weekend morning
☐ weekday afternoon ☐ weekend afternoon
☐ weekday evening ☐ weekend evening

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please return it to the box at the front desk.

For Office Use Only
☐☐☐

Questionnaire for Library Administrators

I. Library Characteristics

Type of Library: ☐ city ☐ township ☐ county ☐ district ☐ village

Library Population Served:
- ☐ less than 5,000
- ☐ 5,001 to 10,000
- ☐ 10,001 to 25,000
- ☐ 25,001 to 50,000
- ☐ 50,001 to 75,000
- ☐ 50,001 to 75,000
- ☐ over 75,000

II. Library Users

A. Based on general observations, estimate the percentage of library users in each of the following age groups?

____ pre-elementary school
____ elementary school (grades 1 to 6)
____ junior high (grades 7 to 9)
____ high school (grades 10 to 12)
____ ages 17 to 21
____ ages 22 to 39
____ ages 40 to 69
____ retired
100 percent

B. Is there a computer for public access in your library? How many? ____________
☐ yes ☐ no ☐ in our future plans

C. Does your library have an Appropriate Use Policy in place for Internet usage?
☐ yes ☐ no ☐ in our future plans

D. Does your library provide instruction on computer use?
☐ yes, one-on-one ☐ yes, offer classes ☐ no ☐ in future plans

E. Do you think it is important that Internet access is provided at this library? ☐ yes ☐ no

F. Do you think it is important that instruction on safe and appropriate Internet use is provided at this library?
☐ yes ☐ no

G. Who are the main users of the computer(s) in your library? (Rate according to use)

	Frequency of Use					
Users	*Not Frequent* 1	2	*Moderate* 3	4	*Very Frequent* 5	*Don't Know*
1. Business people for business-related uses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Retired people for personal communications	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. School children for class assignments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Hobbyists looking for Internet information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Residents interested in Genealogy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Internet users interested in current events	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Locally elected officials for research purposes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Recreational users for variety of purposes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Summer educational & reading programs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Internet as communications center for businesses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Library/Staff for ILL questions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Library staff for answering reference questions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

III. Public Services

A. Rank each library service by the amount of staff time devoted to it

Users	*Amount of Time*					*Do Not Provide*
	Not Much		*Moderate Amount*		*Much Time*	
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	
1. Helping users find reference materials	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Helping children find story books	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Looking up answers for patrons	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Answering reference questions by phone	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Arranging meetings in library for civic groups	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Scheduling programming to be offered in library	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Helping patrons use the Internet	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Teaching patrons to use library services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Working with civic groups outside the library	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Helping patrons learn to use the computer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Learning new computer applications for library use	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Helping students find materials for classes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Helping senior citizens find reading material	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Working with economic development groups	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. Fund raising to supplement library budget	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. Upgrading staff knowledge by attending Continuing Education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. Upgrading staff skills in friendliness and customer service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. Promoting the importance of reading and reading skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. Providing literacy training programs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. Making presentations to public interest groups	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. Obtaining books through Inter-Library Loan	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. Providing readers advisory to fiction readers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. Providing local history materials for historic preservation or tourism projects in community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. Publicizing library services and programs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. Presenting children's programs and story hours	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. Providing business reference services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. Writing grants to supplement library budget	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. Digitizing unique local historical materials before they deteriorate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29. Working with community groups to provide a community Internet site	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30. Staff taking time to provide friendly, knowledgeable service to customers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

B. Rank the 5 most valuable services that you receive from this library. Use the library service numbers from III A to show your answers (1st is the most important):

____________	____________	____________	____________	____________
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th

C. Which of the library services (listed in III A) have seen *increased* demand on staff time during the past two years?

__________ __________ __________ __________ __________

1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th

D. Which of the library services (listed in III A) have seen *decreased* public demand during the last two years?

__________ __________ __________ __________ __________

1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th

E. If you had more staff or more funds, which public services (listed in III A) would you increase in response to local public demand?

__________ __________ __________ __________ __________

1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th

F. For which of the library services (listed in III A) is the local public demand outpacing the library's funding and staffing capacity?

__________ __________ __________ __________ __________

1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th

IV. Partnerships

A. How has the librarian or library staff partnered with other community groups to provide services?

	Partnering					
Activity	*Never*		*Sometimes*		*Often*	*Don't Know*
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	
1. Worked with the chamber of commerce	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Invited local officials to meet in library	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Invited local officials to library demonstrations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Displayed community information in the library	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Worked with economic development groups	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Spoken to civic organizations about library	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Held offices in local professional groups	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Exhibited at community business expos	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Worked with other libraries in the region	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Marketed library services to businesses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Worked with local schools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Hosted community college literacy classes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Hosted Head Start or preschool parent meetings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Hosted programs given by Cooperative Extension Service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. Hosted programs given by Illinois Arts Council	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. Hosted programs given by Illinois Humanities Council	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. Co-sponsored programs with the local Park District	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. Surveyed other community groups to determine library services they desire	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Partnering					
Activity	*Never*		*Sometimes*		*Often*	*Don't Know*
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	
19. Included members of other community groups in library planning process	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. Entered into inter-governmental agreements with other community agencies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. Participated in community visioning and planning efforts (Mapping or MainStreet strategic planning)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. Local newspapers have run regular features on library	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. Worked with library system	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. Other __________________	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

B. Which of the partnerships have been most beneficial to the library and its users? (Use numbers from IV A to answer) 1st is *most* important:

__________ 1st

__________ 2nd

__________ 3rd

__________ 4th

__________ 5th

V. Library Services

A. What is your *vision* for the library in the next 10 years? (Rate your preferences)

	Preference					
Level of Activity	*Least Prefer*				*Most Prefer*	*Don't Know*
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	
1. New and larger building	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. More usage by general public	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. More involvement by public	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. More involvement by Trustees	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. More instruction offered by library staff to patrons	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. More business use of library	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Greater public financial support of library	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Increase in donations and bequests to library	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Statewide Interlibrary Loan access	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Free use by all residents of the State	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. More active library role in community events	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. More partnerships on programs with local groups	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. More partnerships with state agencies (i.e. Illinois Arts Council & Illinois Humanities Council)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. More partnerships with museums	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. More partnerships with public television stations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. More partnerships with library system	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. Not much change, library will be very much as it is now	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. Other __________________	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

B. How will your library *actually* change in 10 years? (Rank each in likelihood of happening)

	Likelihood					
Level of Activity	*Least Likely*				*Most Likely*	*Don't Know*
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	
1. Library will expand its building size	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Print holdings will increase substantially	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Electronic subscriptions will increase substantially	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Library staff will increase markedly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Internet services will expand in library	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. More computers will be added	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Skill level of library staff will increase	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Improved customer service and customized services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Staff will engage in more outreach services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Public support (financial and moral) will increase	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. More services for very young students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Literacy programs will increase	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Civic groups will use library facilities more	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Library will partner more with other groups	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. More programs for adults in the library	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. More youth programs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. More classes offered in the library	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. Remain much as it is today	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. Will provide fewer services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. Other ______________________________	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

C. What are the main obstacles to achieving your vision?

	Obstacle					
Level of Activity	*Minor Obstacle*				*Major Obstacle*	*Don't Know*
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	
1. Lack of interest by trustees	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. General lack of tax dollars	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Little recognition of library potential	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Little or no interest by public	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Insufficient interest by trustees	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Insufficient motivation by library staff	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Library staff is not adequately trained	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. No apparent need for change in city	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Declining population to be served	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Too much competition for public's time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Businesses don't have need for library services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Community is generally declining	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Library building is inadequate and too small	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Lack of acceptance of library in public debates	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. Lack of sufficient library staff	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. Inability of libraries to articulate the value of their services to the public	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. Other ____________________________	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

D. What are the two most important activities you have undertaken in the past two years to improve library services and gain support from people in the service area?

1. ____

2. ____

E. What two additional activities would you undertake, if funds permit, to improve library services and how much would they cost?

Activity	*Cost*
1. ______________________________	$ __________
2. ______________________________	$ __________

Thanks for your cooperation

Surveys may be returned by ***March 30, 1999***:

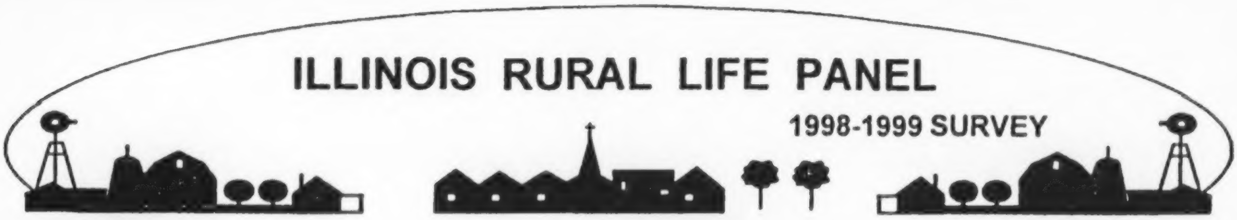
Karen Stott, Library Development Consultant
Alliance Library System
2201 Eastland Drive
Bloomington, IL 61704

For Office Use Only

☐☐☐

ILLINOIS RURAL LIFE PANEL

1998-1999 SURVEY



Published by:
Applied Social Research Unit
Illinois State University
Campus Box 4950
Normal, IL 61790-4950
Tel: 309-438-7771
Internet: www.socialresearch.ilstu.edu

Sponsored by:
Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, Western Illinois University
Illinois Arts Council
Applied Social Research Unit, Illinois State University

Introduction

This questionnaire asks about your experience as a rural resident with arts and cultural activities, public libraries, housing, and economic and workforce development. You are considered a rural resident for this survey because you live in a nonmetropolitan county—a county that has no community with more than 50,000 people. Many questions refer to "your community." If you live in a town, that town is "your community" for this survey. If you live outside of town, please consider the town closest to you as "your community" (or consider the place to which your mail is addressed if you feel that is more appropriate). ***Please be assured your individual responses will remain confidential.***

Public library services

11. Is there a public library in your community? ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ don't know

12. If **no** to question 11, approximately how many miles away is the nearest public library?
☐ 0-4 miles ☐ 5-9 miles ☐ 10-24 miles ☐ 25-49 miles ☐ 50+ miles ☐ don't know

13. Do you have a current library card?
☐ yes
☐ no ☞ 13a. If **no**, are you eligible for a library card? ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ don't know
☐ don't know

14. Do you use the public library?
☐ yes ☞ 14a. How often? ☐ once/week ☐ twice/month ☐ once/month ☐ less than once/month
☐ no ☞ 14b. If **no**, skip to question 19.

15. How do you make use of the library? Check all that apply.
☐ information for my business
☐ recreational reading
☐ access to newspapers, magazines, or other periodicals
☐ locate reference information
☐ attend training programs
☐ children participate in summer reading program
☐ other (please specify)________________________
☐ use the copy machine
☐ use the Internet
☐ use a FAX machine
☐ gather information for my hobby
☐ attend meetings of social groups
☐ attend business meetings

16. Are you satisfied with the services the library provides? ☐ yes ☐ no

17. What are the most important things you would like to see the library change? *Check all that apply.*

☐ more current recreational reading or hobby materials
☐ information on job opportunities and careers
☐ more access to materials in other libraries
☐ more assistance in finding library materials
☐ better seating, lighting, or work space
☐ more space for programs or meeting rooms
☐ more programs for youth
☐ open more hours
☐ other (please specify)____________________
☐ more current newspapers and magazines
☐ more information about my community
☐ more help with using the Internet
☐ more access to computers
☐ access to more videos
☐ distance learning classes available
☐ more programs for adults
☐ ability to search library's card catalog with home computer

18. How do you access library materials? Check all that apply.

☐ access library card catalog from home computer
☐ go to the actual library building
☐ order items from other locations in the state to be picked up at local library
☐ use a community information network created by library
☐ use library's Internet home page
☐ other (please specify)____

19. Is there anyone living in your household who is under age 18?

☐ yes ☞ Go to question 20.
☐ no ☞ Go to question 22.

20. How often do these individuals (under age 18) use the local public library?

☐ once/week
☐ less than once/month
☐ twice/month
☐ only when school assignments require
☐ once/month
☐ never

21. If these individuals do not use the library, why not? Check all that apply.

☐ school assignments do not require it
☐ usually purchase reading materials
☐ library does not have needed/enough materials
☐ no programs offered for child's age group
☐ use computer/Internet at home
☐ do not read books very much
☐ library not open at convenient times
☐ programs offered at inconvenient times
☐ materials ordered by my library from other libraries do not arrive in timely manner
☐ other (specify)____

22. Do you think having a public library . . .	yes	no	don't know
a. makes a community a better place to live?..................	☐	☐	☐
b. helps attract businesses to a community?.....................	☐	☐	☐
c. helps attract residents to a community?.......................	☐	☐	☐

23. Would you pay higher property taxes to improve the library?

☐ yes ☞ 23a. **If yes, how much more per month?** ☐ $1 ☐ $2 to $5
☐ no ☐ $6 to $10 ☐ more than $10
☐ don't know

Municipal Questionnaire

Municipality ________________________ County ____________________________

Your Name __________________________ Title ______________________________

Phone ______________________________ Fax _______________________________

Does your city have home rule? (*Please check one.*) ☐ Yes ☐ No

III. Role of Library in Community Services

Public libraries often have computers, Internet access, and access to materials in other libraries that can be useful in local economic development initiatives. Some cities see libraries as vital information links in the community and a part of economic development marketing efforts.

a. Is there a public library in your city? ☐ Yes ☐ No ***If yes***, is the library financed by:
☐ city ☐ township ☐ county ☐ library district

b. Do library personnel actively participate in local economic development efforts or provide relevant information used in economic development efforts? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If the library is ***not*** involved directly in city development efforts, is it because . . .

- ☐ library is not open regularly
- ☐ library is run by volunteers/ part-time staff with no knowledge of development
- ☐ library personnel have shown no interest
- ☐ do not know about library materials available
- ☐ library assistance is not needed
- ☐ other, specify ____

c. Which of the following services does the library provide?

	Service	***Yes***	***No***	***Don't know***
i.	houses local economic development information such as brochures, market analyses	☐	☐	☐
ii.	public Internet access?	☐	☐	☐
iii.	hosts training programs for businesses?	☐	☐	☐
iv.	provides space for community meetings?	☐	☐	☐
v.	provides public access to FAX machines?	☐	☐	☐
vi.	maintains a section on business materials?	☐	☐	☐
vii.	serves as a community training center?	☐	☐	☐
viii.	locates and loans materials from other libraries	☐	☐	☐

SCOPE OF INTEREST NOTICE
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Managing Illinois Libraries:

Providing Services Customers Value

Executive Summary

by Norman Walzer, Karen Stott, and Lori Sutton

Abstract:

Public libraries are an important asset in virtually any size community, but especially in small towns where many social institutions are in decline or have left. Libraries increase the quality of life, can help attract new residents, and can support the quality of life that is essential to attracting businesses.

The results from the surveys of library users, administrators, rural public, and mayors confirm the fact that public library services are held in high esteem by users and rural residents alike. The growth in Internet use, computer training, and similar services are well-received by residents. The shifts in library services reported by library administrators closely mirror the preferences reported by users.

Increased services are pressuring library budgets and it is clear from the responses that libraries will need additional funds to provide more services in the future. Library administrators reported that they expect increases in bequests and other financial support and feel that public support, overall, will continue to grow.

Copies of the complete report are available online at: www.IIRA.org/pubs/

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Executive Summary

The transformation of the economy from an industrial base to an information or knowledge-based society has brought many changes for businesses and residents in rural areas. Greater opportunities to access new sources of information, even from remote rural areas, clearly exist. Businesses have moved to take advantage of this access to lower their costs of doing business. Rural residents can purchase goods and services using the Internet or other forms of e-commerce to reduce the travel costs associated with living in remote areas.

The advent of computers and the Internet has opened new opportunities for rural public libraries. Now libraries can provide access to information sources that formerly were virtually unavailable in small towns. Many information sources are available in rural libraries because of electronic access and library partnerships. Illinois libraries cooperate to share resources using tools created and maintained by regional library systems. Some of these tools are the Union List of Periodicals, listings of magazines and journal holdings, LLSAPs (Local Library System Automation Programs), and listings of print collection offerings in member libraries.

These tools have been conceptualized and developed by the Illinois regional library systems that were created to encourage Illinois library cooperation for the past 32 years. The information location and retrieval tools created by the 12 regional library systems are now mounted on the Internet. Recent innovations have made Illinois one of the first states to offer statewide resource sharing. This resource sharing is supported by both the Virtual Illinois Catalog (VIC), the web-based online catalog of statewide library holdings, and by a delivery system of vans that cross Illinois daily to deliver library requests. FirstSearch, an electronic resource containing full-text journal articles and indexes, is delivered via the Internet to rural libraries because of a licensing agreement negotiated for all libraries in Illinois by the Illinois State Library. Using FirstSearch, libraries in rural Illinois can access WorldCat, a source containing the merged catalogs of libraries around the world.

Libraries can work with business owners to help them stay current with the latest technology by providing Internet access and instruction to library customers on the appropriate use of the Internet. Librarians are now in a position to help users evaluate Internet sites to determine their validity and/or appropriateness for various user groups.

Libraries also can help residents, especially students, access new information sources and help them bridge the disparity between educational programs in metro and rural areas. Increasingly, librarians are being encouraged to approach customer service in many of the same ways that businesses might respond in the private sector.

This report examines practices and policies of rural public libraries in nearly 30 counties in central Illinois in 1999. Most of these libraries (72.7 percent) serve a population of less than 5,000 residents. Only 5.2 percent serve a population of more than 25,000. Most of the libraries (62.8 percent) are financed by special districts, as is typical of libraries in Illinois. Thus, the information contained in this report will be of most benefit to small public libraries and policymakers in rural areas.

The analyses are intended to help library administrators understand the attitudes of users, the general public, and local public officials in regards to current library services and services that should be provided in the future. Responses from mail surveys of library users, library administrations, the Illinois Rural Life Panel, and mayors in central Illinois are systematically analyzed so that library administrators can assess how well current services are being perceived and the areas that might be improved to meet customers' needs.

Library Users

A sample of 2,776 library users in 79 libraries within the Alliance Library System (ALS) was surveyed. The library users were asked about the quality of current services, additional services they would like, and whether they would pay more to have additional services provided. User responses are analyzed by age and income to better understand the responses.

Library users were asked to indicate the importance of 34 services regularly provided by many libraries. The services were grouped into those designed to help users improve their job or income status and specific services that libraries generally provide to all users. To make the information manageable, the services were grouped into nine broad categories and users were asked to rate the importance of each using a five-point Likert Scale ranging from "not important" to "very important."

Overall, customers ranked competent and friendly service as most important. In other words, they value librarians who are knowledgeable and willing to help them with requests. They also value interlibrary loan access, access to the Internet, children and youth services, and hobby and leisure services, as well as basic reference services. Different responses are found by age and income level but, by and large, the differences can be explained by the direct value of the specific services to the population cohort and/or their familiarity with the services provided.

Services that did not have a direct impact on users were rated lower. For instance, the category of economic development and business services was ranked lowest, followed by employment and workforce development programs. These programs do not directly affect a large number of users and many may not have been familiar with their benefits.

A more detailed examination of the user responses shows that obtaining interlibrary loans, improving family members' grades in school, gaining access to the Internet, and reading out-of-town newspapers and magazines are considered very important by library users in this study.

Library users overwhelming (99.0 percent) see the public library as adding to the quality of life in the community. Also, 64.0 percent reported that libraries help attract businesses, and 80.4 percent reported that libraries help attract or retain residents. Furthermore, 96.2 percent see a positive connection between library services and improving a family member's grades in school. Clearly, library users are pleased with library services in Illinois.

Users (71.2 percent) also are willing to pay more to have library services enhanced and 82.3 percent are willing to pay between $1.01 and $3.00 per month for the increases in service. This willingness to pay more does not seem to be related to the income level of respondents.

When asked to place a dollar value on the services received by their family from the library during the past 12 months, users reported an average of $853 or more than $70 per month. This value, of course, is based on people currently using the library and may not be relevant for others in the community.

The importance that respondents assigned to each of the nine service categories was examined in terms of the willingness to pay. Substantial differences were reported in preferences for services and willingness to pay.

Customers were grouped into those expressing a high level of satisfaction with library services and those expressing low satisfaction. A definite relationship exists between residents expressing high satisfaction and the provision of Internet and computer services. The size of library collection is also important in determining satisfaction levels, with users of small libraries more likely to report less satisfaction.

Library Administrators

The study paid special attention to library services for which demand is increasing and those for which the demand has declined in the past two years. Library administrators reported that the two services with the greatest increases in demand have been helping users learn the Internet (71.1 percent) and helping them use computers (64.5 percent).

Librarians reported several services that had experienced decreased demand in the past two years. Decreases most often reported are literacy training (35.5 percent), business reference services (33.9 percent), and staff presentations to public interest groups (29.0 percent). In some instances, these declines probably resulted from changes in public need. The results may also suggest that libraries' limited human and fiscal resources have been reallocated to higher demand service areas.

Library administrators also noted a decline in private fundraising efforts; however, in recent years, grant opportunities have been available from state government sources which may have lessened the need for librarians to contact other agencies for fiscal resources. Some libraries in the study area have received major bequests for specific projects. This may have lessened the time spent seeking private funding.

Many libraries have experienced financial difficulties reallocating sufficient resources (human and physical) to meet the added demands caused by the explosion in technology. Fortunately, the Secretary of State/State Librarian of Illinois provided computers to every library. In some instances, access to the Internet has been provided by local telecommunication providers or subsidized by e-rate funding. Without regional library systems and the State Library negotiating and purchasing licenses for shared databases offered over the Internet, local library resources would be further drained.

Library administrators reported that, if additional funds were available, helping users with the Internet was the highest priority (56.8 percent). Next in importance was to broaden the program offerings in the library (39.2 percent), followed by marketing library services to the public (23.0 percent), and promoting the importance of reading and reading skills (21.0 percent).

While the specific rankings vary somewhat, there is general agreement between the library administrators' views about what should be expanded and the services that users perceive as important. Overall, community service initiatives and business outreach activities were ranked less important by both librarians and users. This ranking may reflect the fact that the current users are not directly affected by these services and thus, are not aware of their value.

Perceptions of Mayors

Public libraries serve a diverse clientele, including public agencies within the community. Since they receive a majority of their funding from either the city government or a special district, it is important to understand how local public officials perceive the services provided by libraries. A survey of Illinois mayors conducted by the IIRA in the fall of 1998 and the winter of 1999 included several questions about mayors' attitudes regarding participation by libraries in local economic development activities. These findings were compared with a national survey of local public officials conducted in 1995 by the Illinois State Library, Library Research Center (LRC) at the University of Illinois. Cities located within the ALS were examined in this report.

In the LRC's statewide survey, local librarians (69 percent) felt that they were responding better than most other local agencies to the needs of residents. In the same survey, however, local public officials (chief executives and budget officers) were less complimentary with only 32 percent reporting that libraries were responding to the needs of residents better than most other local agencies.

Based on the definition of an "ideal library" as a measure of expectation, however, local public officials were much more positive in the LRC study. Eighty-two percent ranked the contributions by libraries to individual or community well-being as high or very high. Sixty percent of library respondents rated their own knowledge of community needs as high or very high, but only 40 percent of local public officials responded in that way.

There are many opportunities for local public libraries to assist with local community and economic development efforts. Library users rated the importance of these efforts relatively low among other activities in which libraries engage, and librarians indicated that not much staff time was devoted to these efforts. Only about one in five mayors responding to the IIRA statewide survey reported active involvement by librarians in local economic development efforts. Part of the explanation, according to the mayors, is that assistance from the library is not needed. Also, some librarians are not trained in local economic development practices and may not be very interested in adding these activities to an already overloaded schedule.

There is some indication that mayors are not always familiar with the holdings and/or services available in libraries, but mayors in the ALS (43.8 percent) reported that they intend to include libraries more in future economic development efforts. The point may be that, for librarians interested in being involved in development efforts, better communication with public officials may be necessary so that mayors realize the types of library services available.

Looking to the Future

Public libraries, even in small communities, will face many challenges because of technological change. Rapid increases in computer and Internet usage have placed additional demands on library personnel to train the public and to give personal assistance to users. Library users and administrators were asked to indicate changes that they expect in the future and ways in which they may have to adjust.

Library users reported a desire for more programming for both youth and adults and increases in the collection. In smaller libraries, the need to increase the collection may be at least partly offset by greater use of interlibrary loan services and electronic databases currently licensed by the Illinois State Library. Expanded computer access and classes are also important but were reported by fewer than 10 percent of the users responding. It may be that the need for service expansion in these areas is limited to specific locations, especially among relatively small libraries with limited budgets.

Library administrators were asked about options for enhancing services and most of these involved building on recent technological advances such as the Internet and on maintaining interlibrary loan partnerships with other libraries. Respondents listed the following as possible service enhancement responses: (1) increase public awareness that interlibrary loan access is available via the Internet; (2) libraries provide enhanced Internet access and increase the availability of training for customers on computer usage; (3) increase awareness of home pages, on-line catalogs, and web sites; and (4) library staff must be prepared as trainers through professional continuing education courses to offer more public education on the use of new computer applications in the library.

Library administrators also realize that libraries must gain public support if they are to receive adequate funding. When asked how they might accomplish this, library administrators suggested several approaches. Libraries can build partnerships with other libraries, library systems, and agencies, such as schools, to accomplish their mission. They must also meet the customer demands for enhanced library programming. Library administrators expressed a recognition of the need to listen to customers in order to improve customer service and to offer more customized library services.

Increased staffing at libraries was suggested as one of the best ways to improve customer service. Strategic long-range planning (i.e., ALA's Planning for Results) and other community needs assessment methodologies can assist planners to make library services more relevant to the current needs of a community.

Libraries will also need to aggressively pursue new revenue streams to purchase new and upgraded technology. Many of these strategies for improving library service in the future will require time and effort that may not be readily available at the local library level, especially in small rural libraries. They may have to rely on assistance from regional library systems or other agencies.

Public Library Services in the Future

Librarians were asked for their vision regarding changes that will occur in the next decade to impact public service. While differences were reported by size of library and region, several trends are common among many respondents.

- More usage of public libraries was predicted.
- An increase in library funding from bequests and donations was foreseen.
- More public involvement in planning and increased taxpayer support of libraries was anticipated.
- An increase in interlibrary loan activity was envisioned.
- More partnerships with local, regional, and statewide agencies were predicted.

Overall, library administrators seem positive about the future for public libraries, although they certainly recognize the challenges that must be faced. Specifically, library administrators were asked to identify obstacles that will impact their ability to achieve their vision. Two obstacles emerged as most significant.

One of the greatest obstacles perceived by librarians is competition for the public's time. Greater work or family demands may have an impact on the public's time to pursue recreational reading or to seek information.

The other major obstacle is limited financial resources. In fact, during the 5 past three years (FY94-95 compared with FY96-97) local public libraries within ALS have seen a 3.0 percent increases in operating expenses in inflation adjusted dollars. This is not an annual figure; rather, it is a total for the three years. In general, a local public library's revenue is composed of 85 percent local property taxes and 7 percent state sources (i.e., special grants).

When library administrators were asked to realistically assess and balance their vision for the future with the perceived obstacles, they predicted several actual changes within the next ten years. Administrators of both large and small libraries agreed that the skill level of library staff would increase and so would the level of customer service provided by library staff. They also agreed that more computers and Internet services would be provided in the future. Administrators of larger public libraries identified twice as many changes that they believed would actually become reality, setting an ambitious and optimistic agenda for the future of their libraries.

In addition, library administrators identified two areas where public demands currently outpace the library's fiscal and staffing resources. Helping customers use the Internet (71.9 percent) and assisting customers to learn to use computers (67.2 percent) were named with greater frequency than any other services.

If additional funds became available for libraries, public library administrators indicated they would budget for these improvements:

- Offering more youth services programming and more programs for adults
- Library construction or building renovation and remodeling projects
- Technology upgrades to support Internet and computer-related improvements
- Increased library staff to offer improved customer service

At the beginning of the new century, libraries face challenges and opportunities that will leave no library untouched. Public libraries will become either much more than they are now—or much less. Based on analysis of customer preferences and emerging technology trends, librarians must be proactive in determining the destiny of their libraries. Libraries must maintain a balance between those services that can best be delivered using new technologies with limited staff intervention and those services that require increased staff time with human interaction.

This report summarizes several Illinois initiatives on the horizon in 2000 that can bring new vitality to libraries if library administrators and staff are prepared to embrace the innovative opportunities. To make Illinois libraries demand-driven institutions, library administrators and boards must listen to customers and design an appropriate mix of library services to address the needs of customers of all ages from a variety of economic and educational levels as lifelong learners.